VISIONARIES

CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU

Could a man of flesh and blood be Lord Vishnu himself? The infant who insisted on claiming the offerings made to the lord had matured into a single-minded Vaishnava. People thronged to him for his happy, simple message of love.

This is the story of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the renowned Vaishnava saint (16th century) who popularized the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. His followers regard him as an avatar of Krishna.

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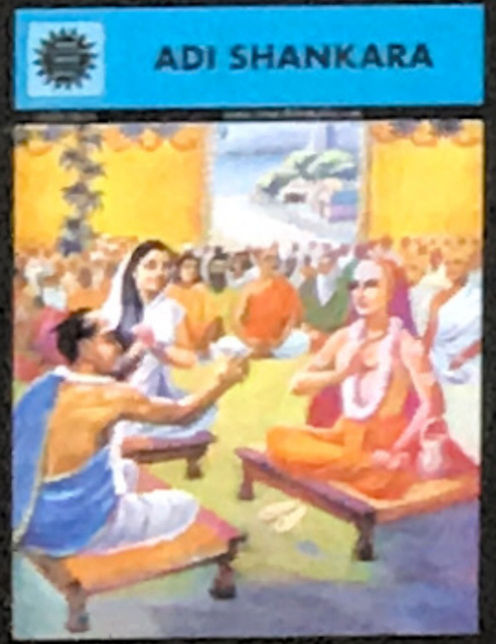

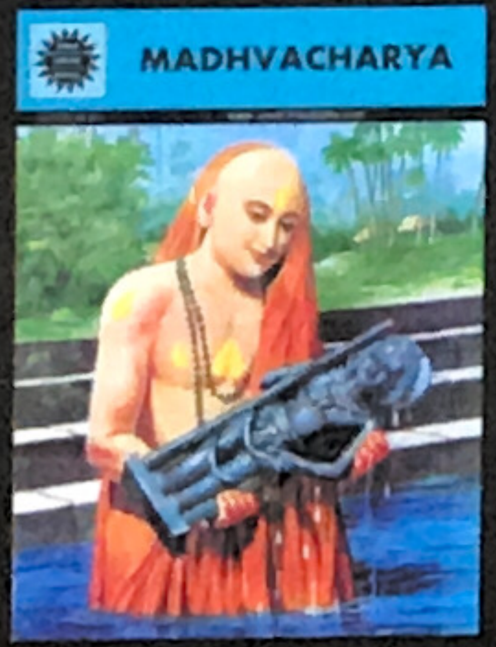

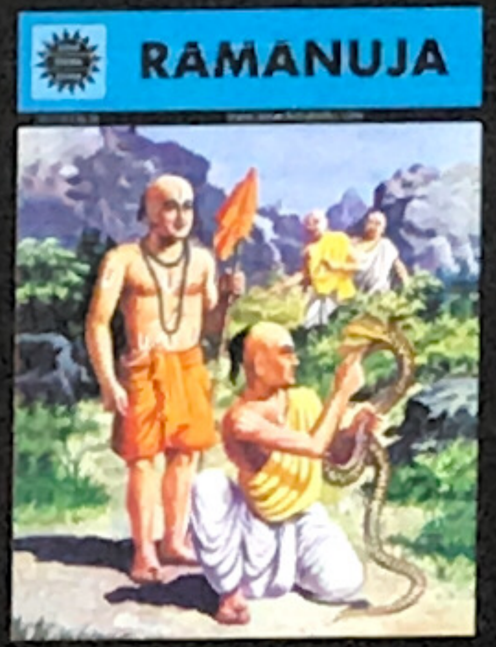

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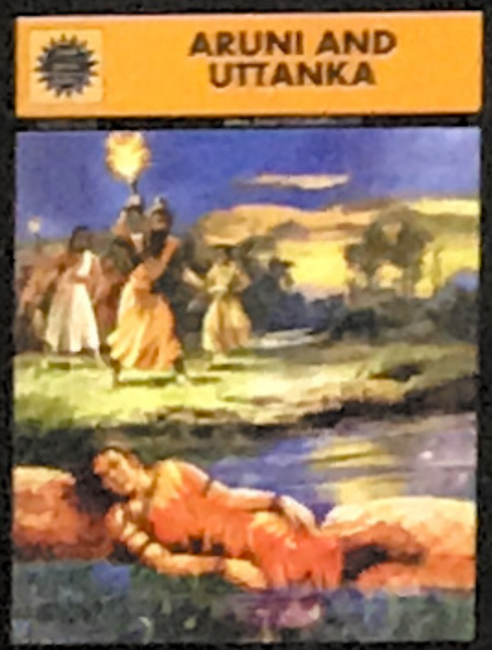

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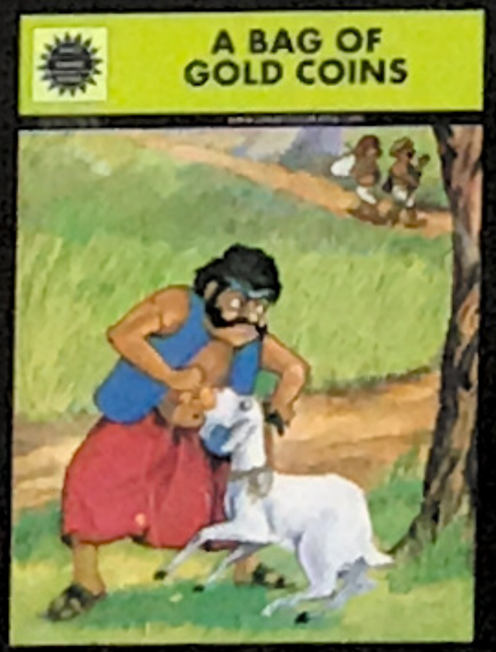

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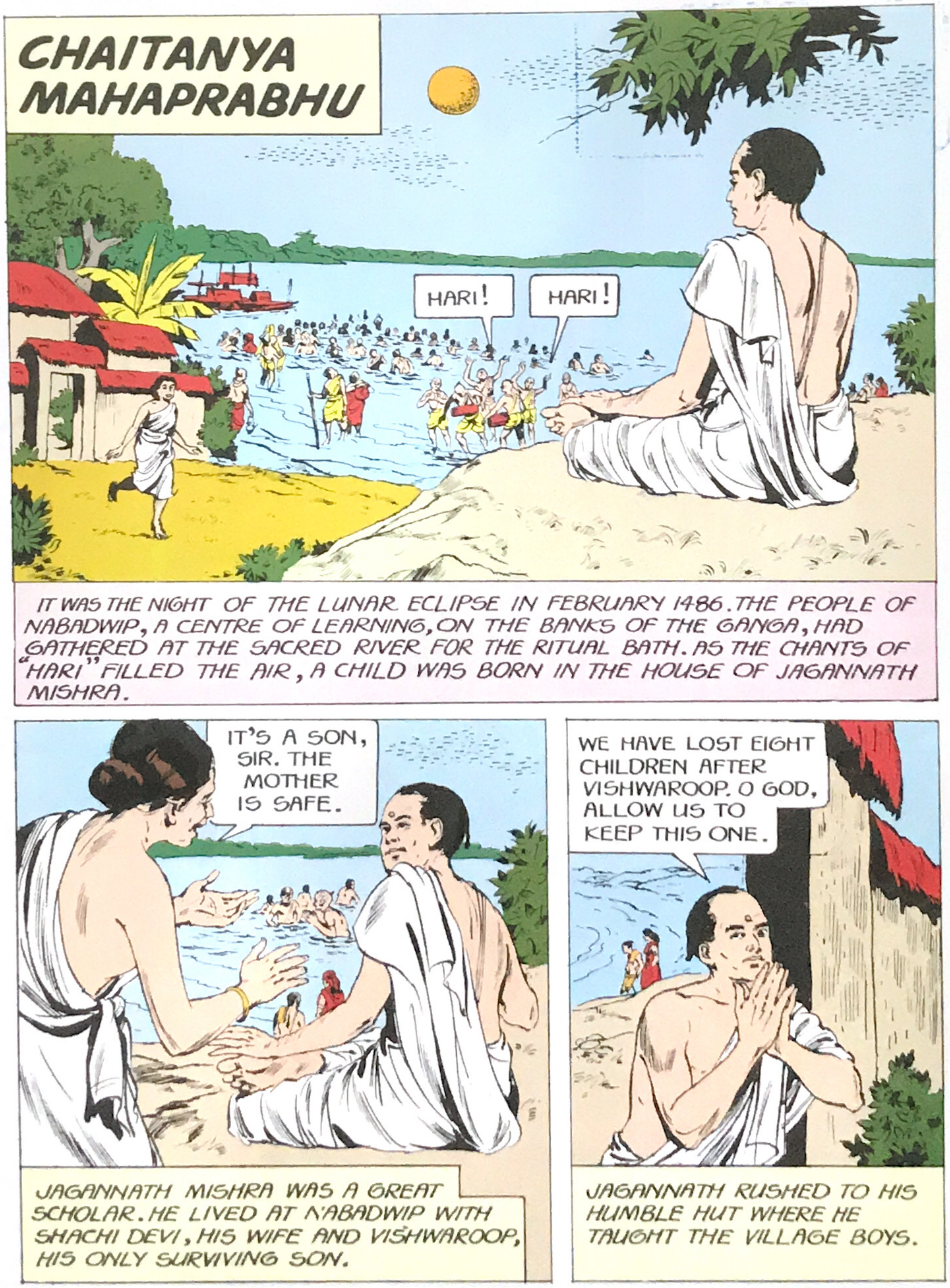
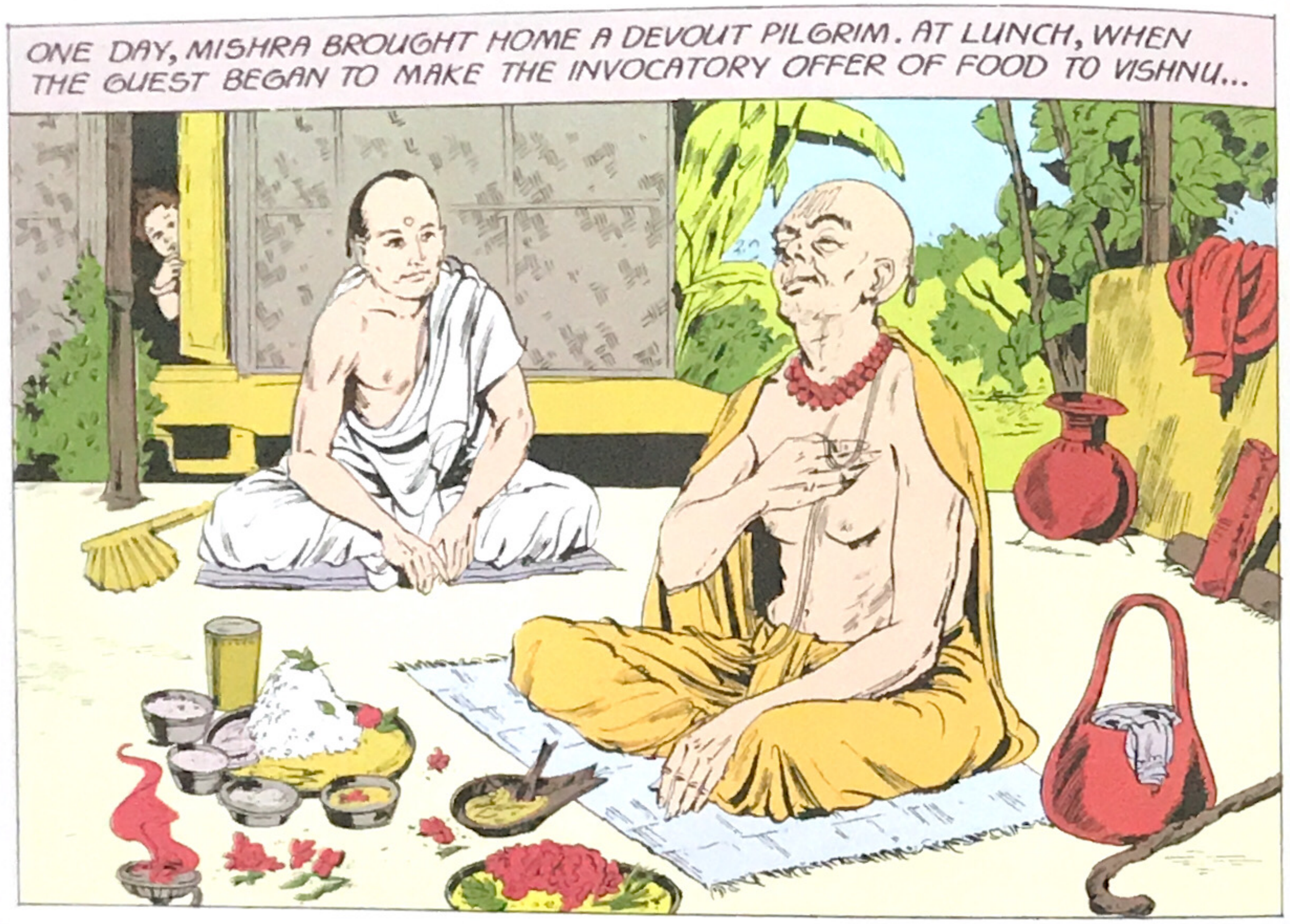
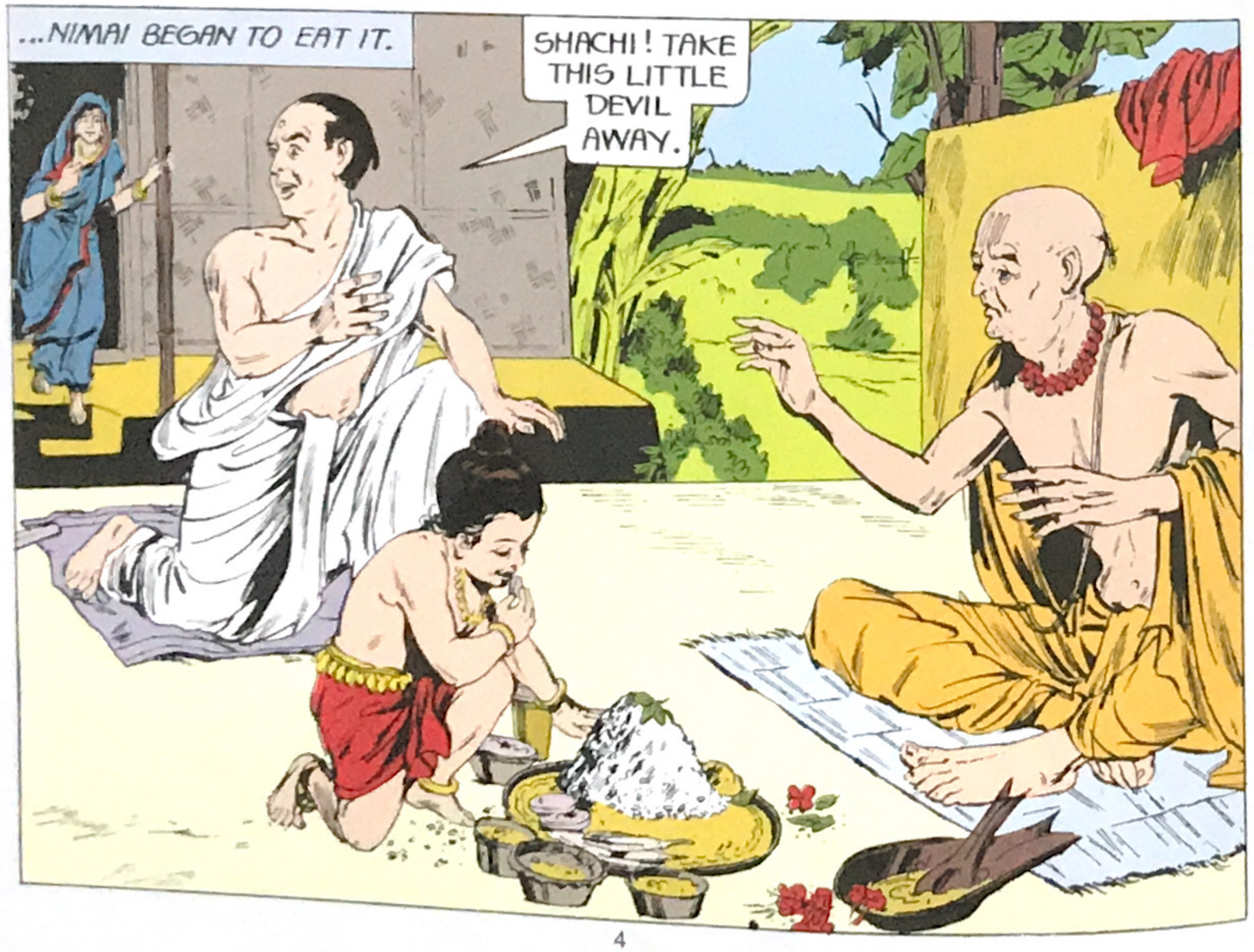


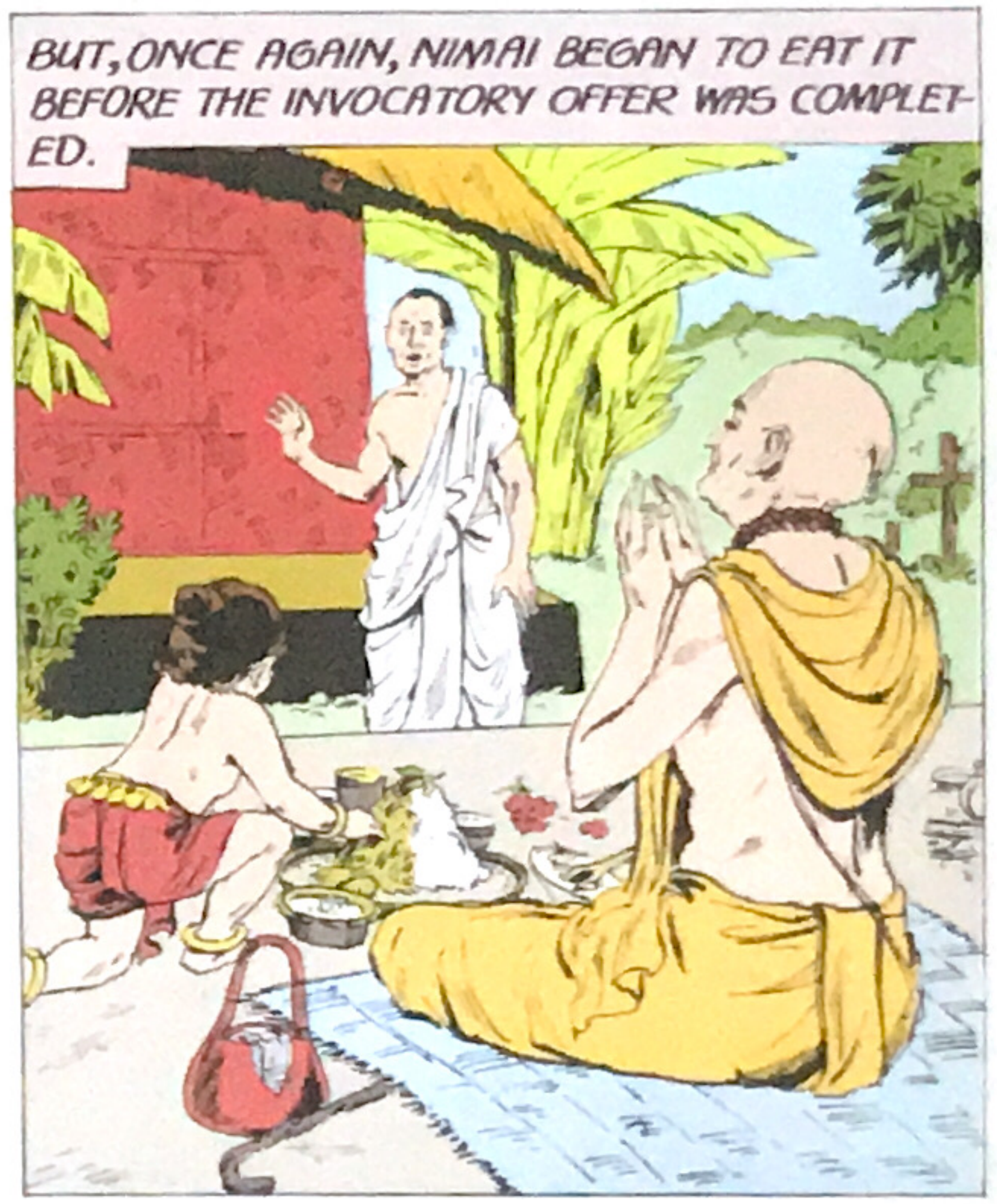
* OF BITTER TASTE.

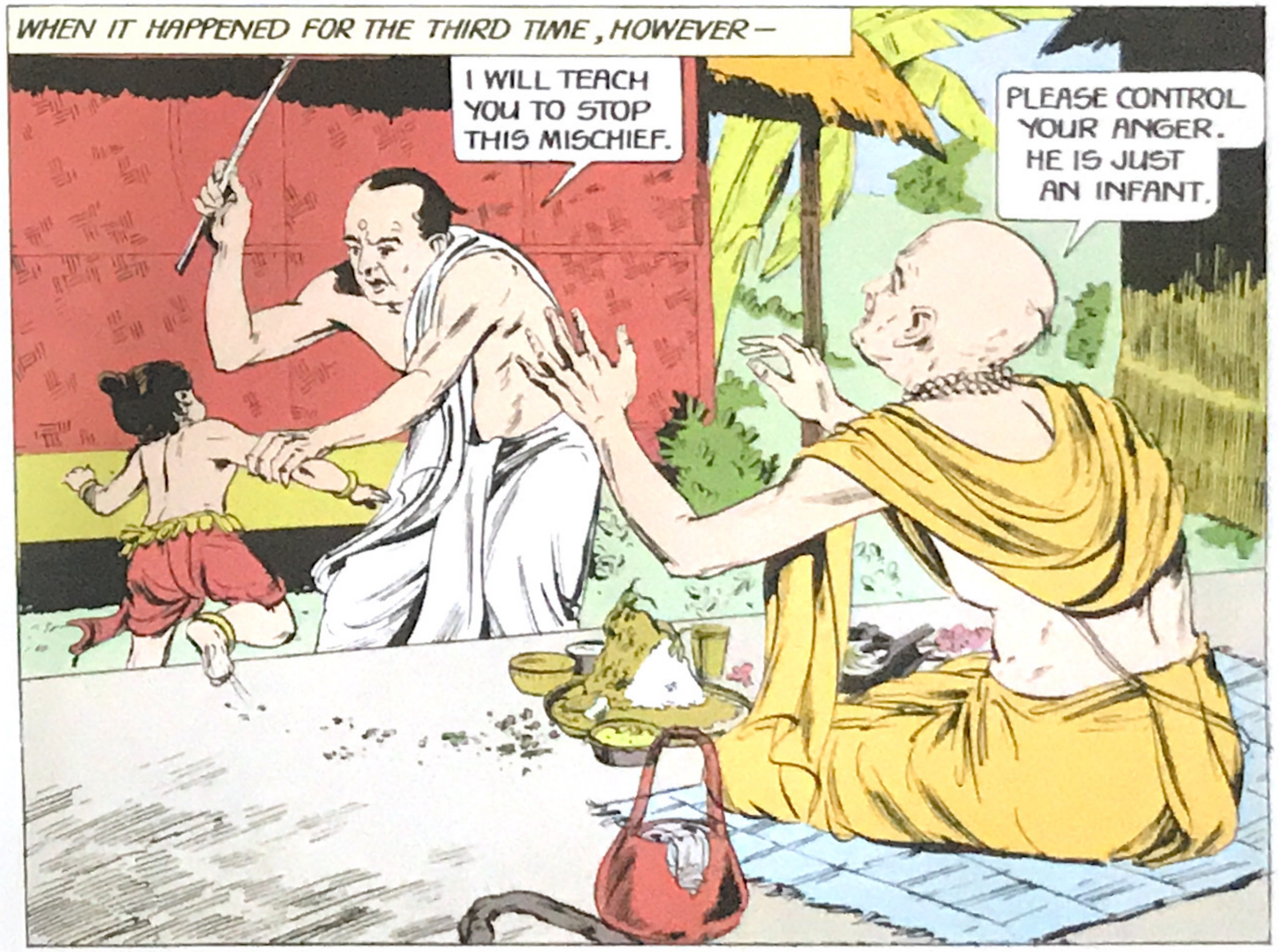
* ANOTHER NAME FOR VISHNU. # SAY HARI.

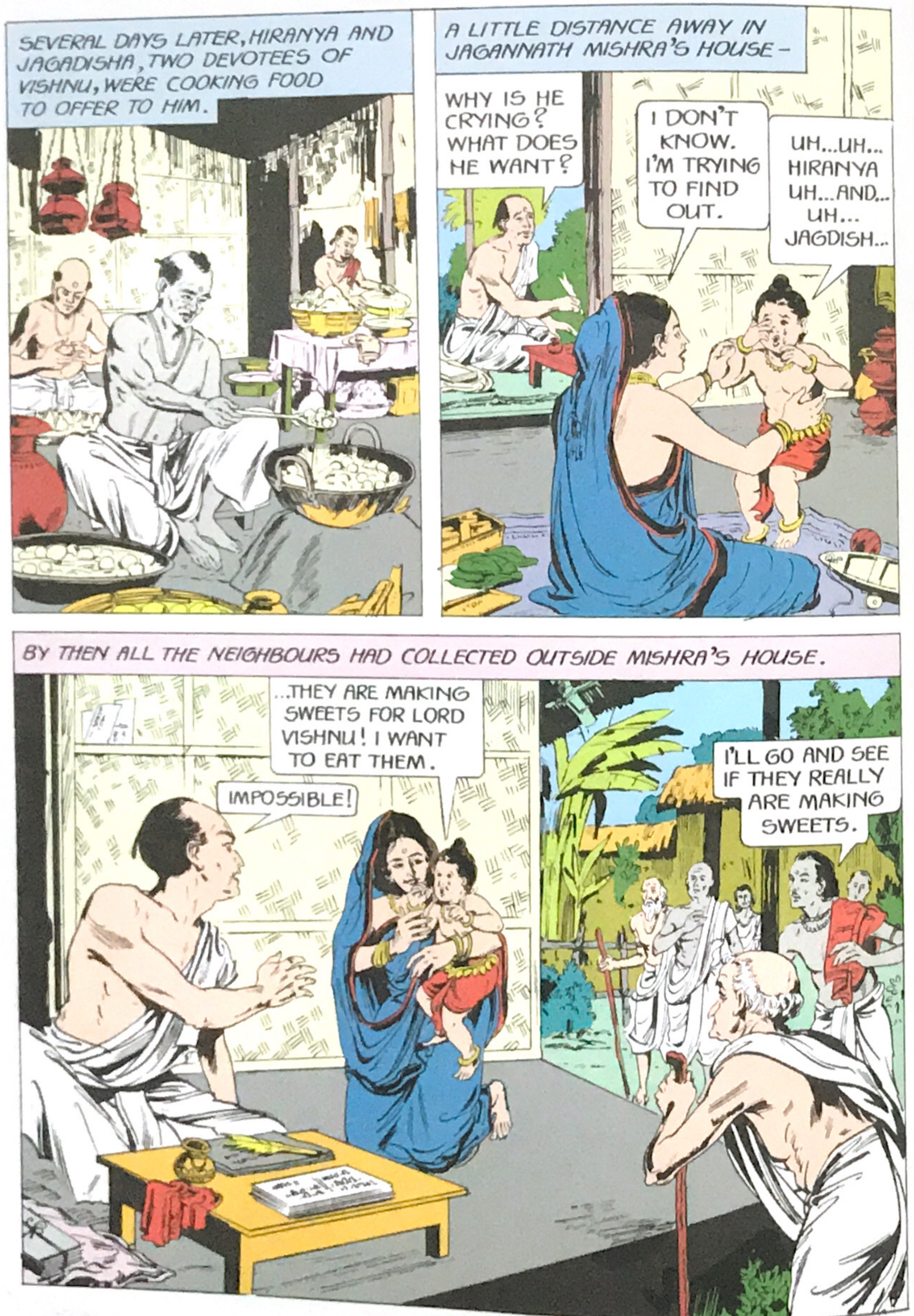

ONE DAY, MISHRA BROUGHT HOME A DEVOUT PILGRIM. AT LUNCH, WHEN THE GUEST BEGAN TO MAKE THE INVOCATORY OFFER OF FOOD TO VISHNU...

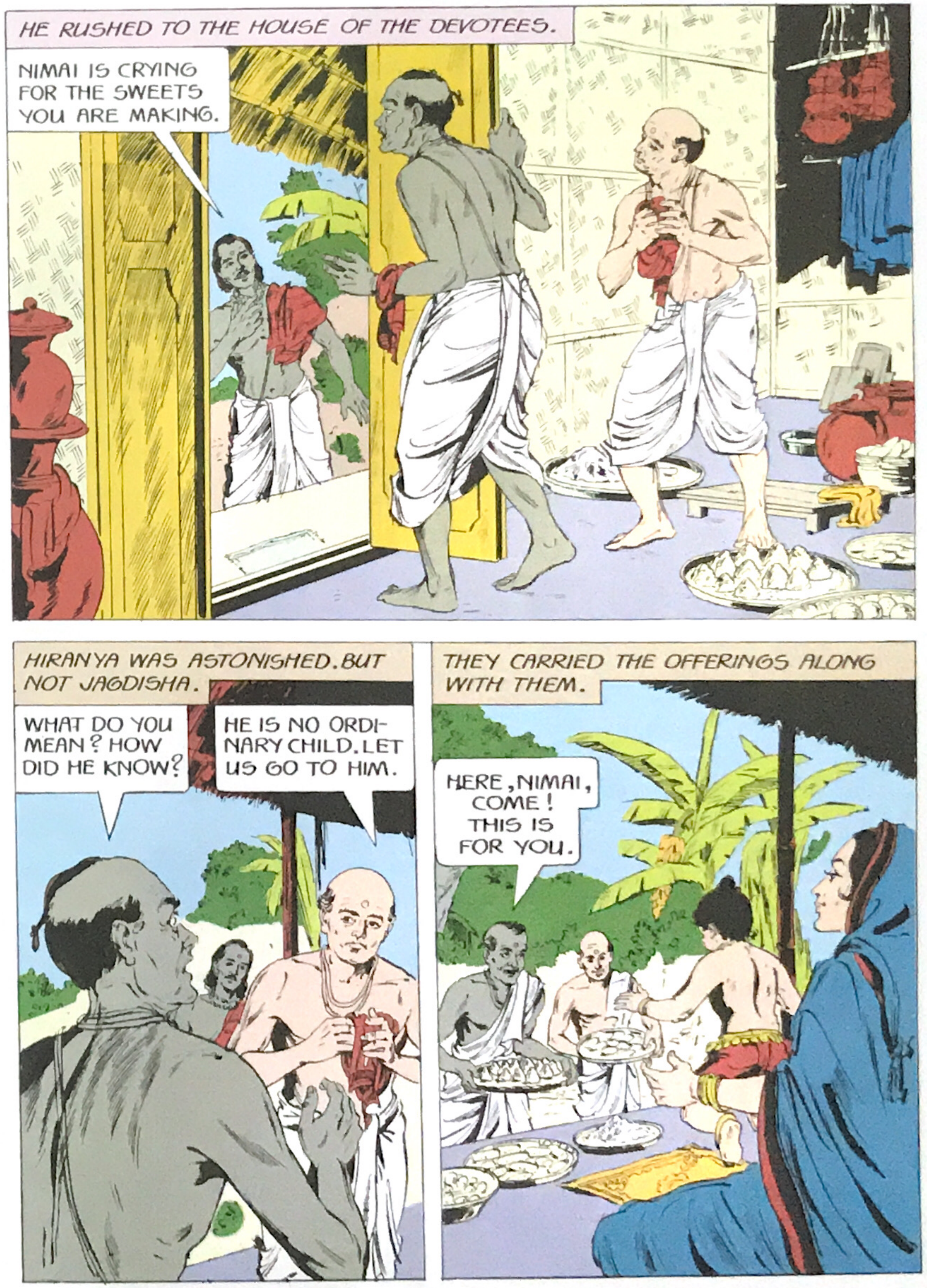

...NIMAI BEGAN TO EAT IT.
SHACHI! TAKE THIS LITTLE DEVIL AWAY.

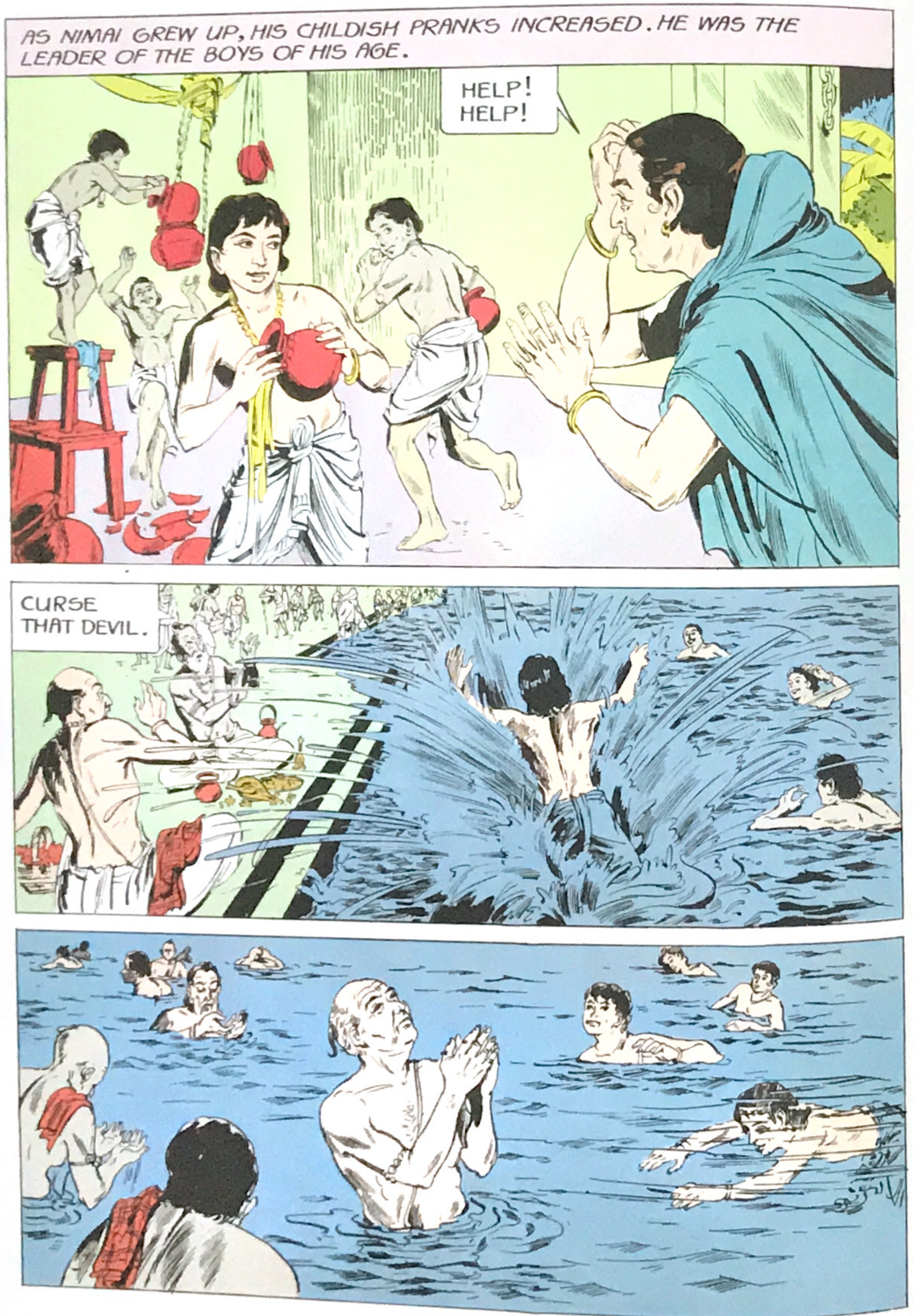
SINCE LEFT-OVERS SHOULD NOT BE OFFERED TO A DEITY, THE BRAHMAN HAD TO COOK AFRESH.

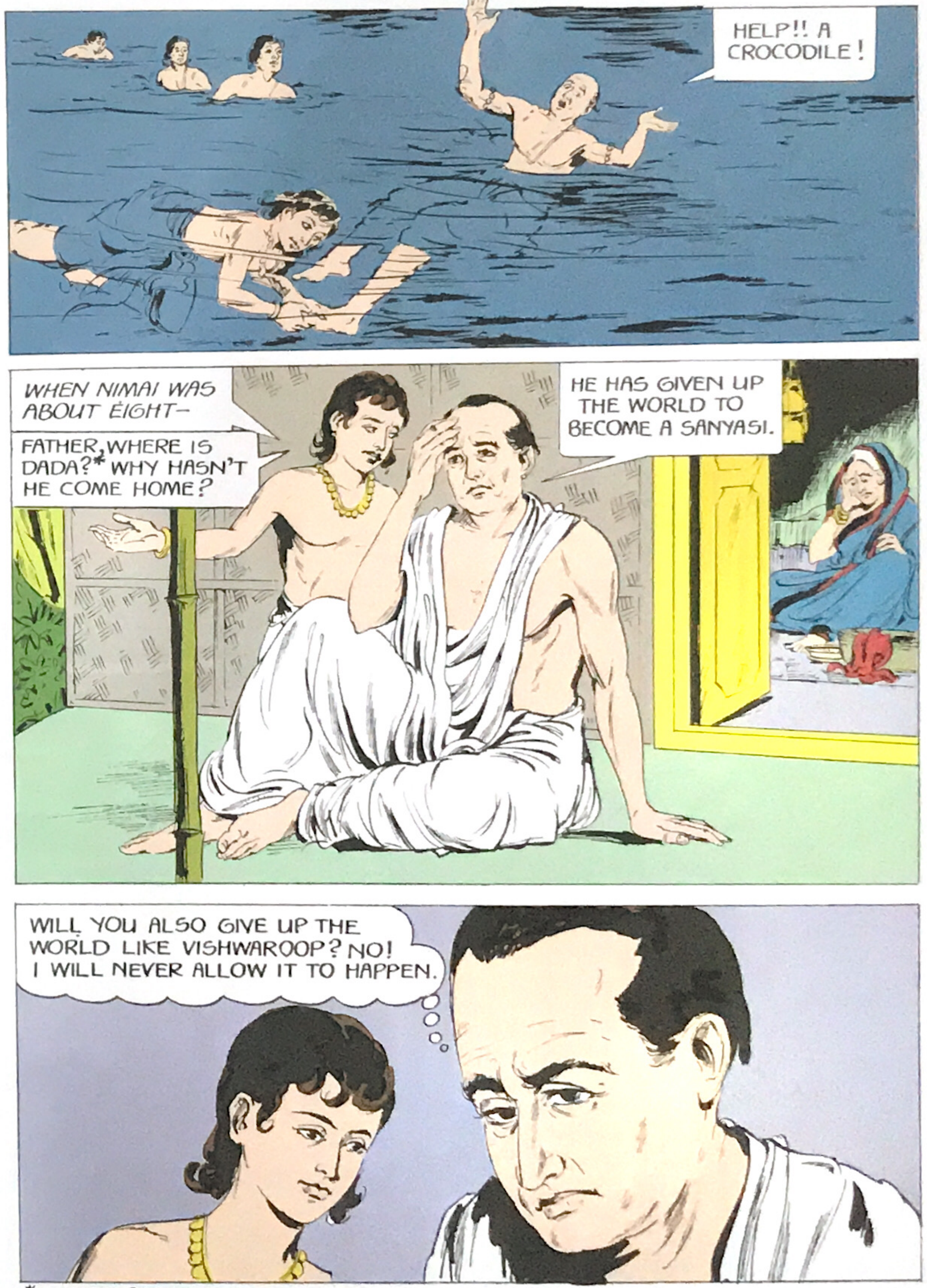

BUT, ONCE AGAIN, NIMAI BEGAN TO EAT IT BEFORE THE INVOCATORY OFFER WAS COMPLETED.


WHEN IT HAPPENED FOR THE THIRD TIME, HOWEVER—
I WILL TEACH YOU TO STOP THIS MISCHIEF.
PLEASE CONTROL YOUR ANGER. HE IS JUST AN INFANT.

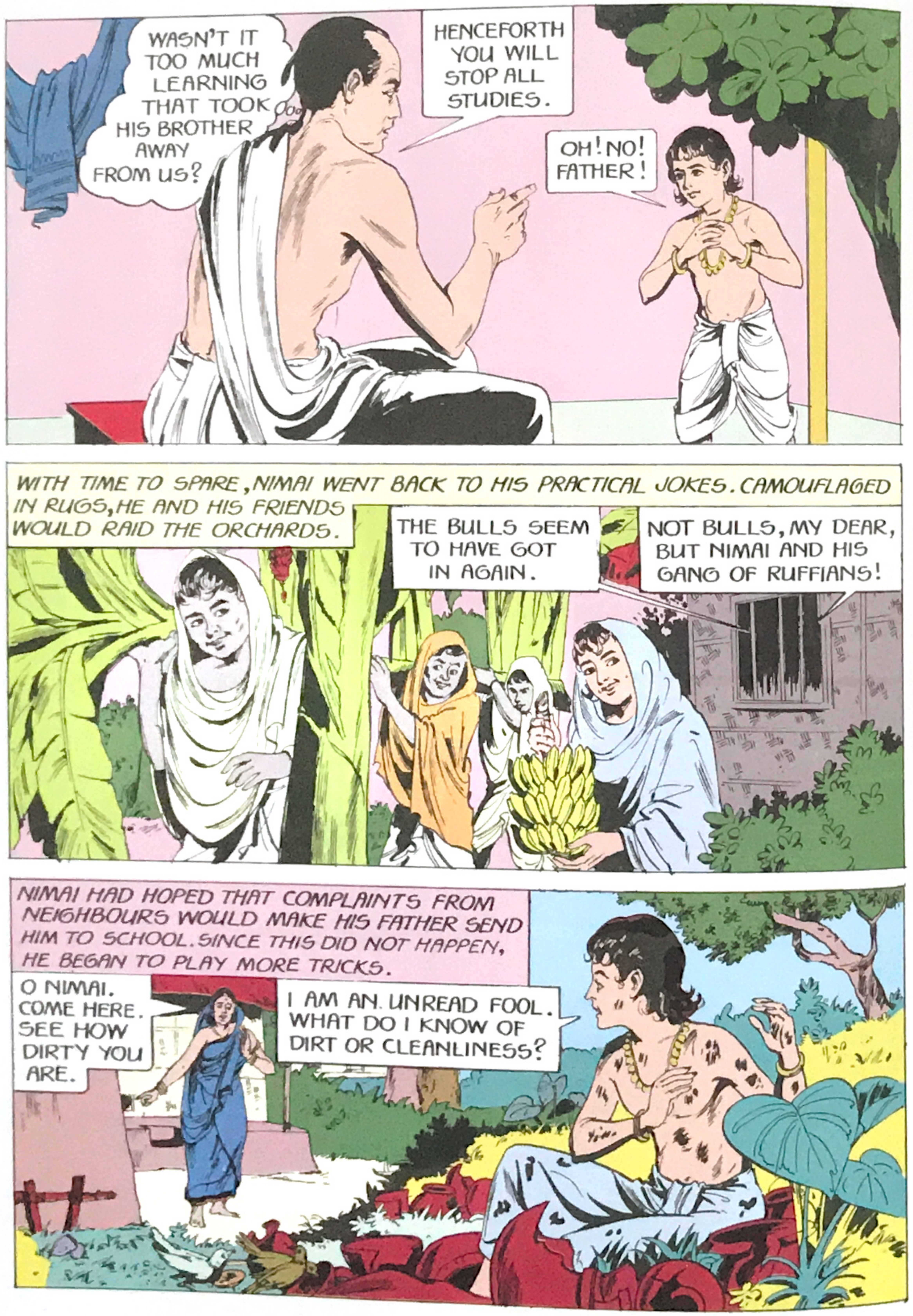

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, HIRANYA AND JAGADISHA, TWO DEVOTEES OF VISHNU, WERE COOKING FOOD TO OFFER TO HIM.
A LITTLE DISTANCE AWAY IN JAGANNATH MISHRA'S HOUSE–
WHY IS HE CRYING? WHAT DOES HE WANT?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M TRYING TO FIND OUT.
UH...UH... HIRANYA UH...AND... UH... JAGDISH...
BY THEN ALL THE NEIGHBOURS HAD COLLECTED OUTSIDE MISHRA'S HOUSE.
...THEY ARE MAKING SWEETS FOR LORD VISHNU! I WANT TO EAT THEM.
IMPOSSIBLE!
I'LL GO AND SEE IF THEY REALLY ARE MAKING SWEETS.

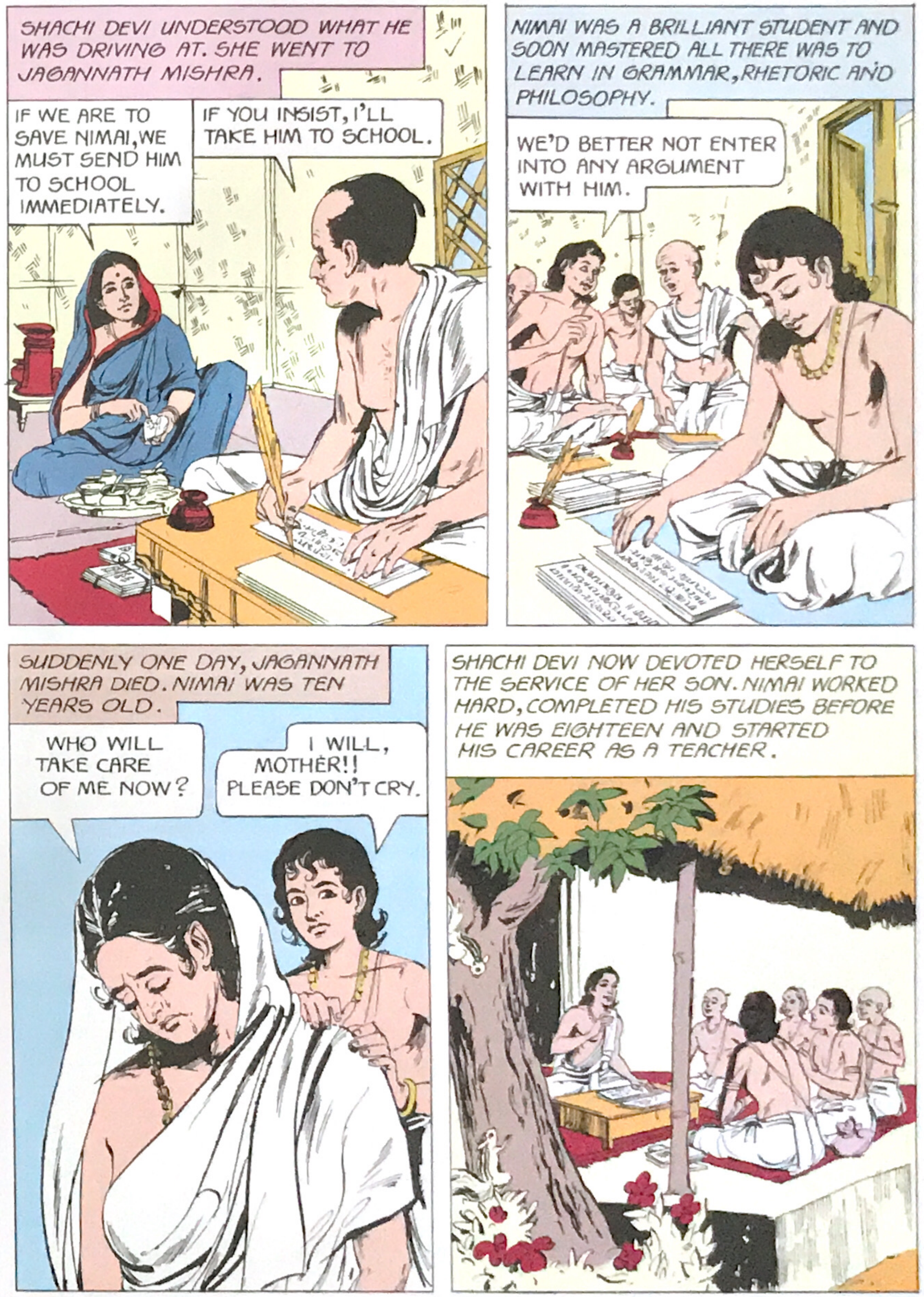

HE RUSHED TO THE HOUSE OF THE DEVOTEES.
NIMAI IS CRYING FOR THE SWEETS YOU ARE MAKING.
HIRANYA WAS ASTONISHED. BUT NOT JAGDISHA.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? HOW DID HE KNOW?
HE IS NO ORDINARY CHILD. LET US GO TO HIM.
THEY CARRIED THE OFFERINGS ALONG WITH THEM.
HERE, NIMAI, COME! THIS IS FOR YOU.

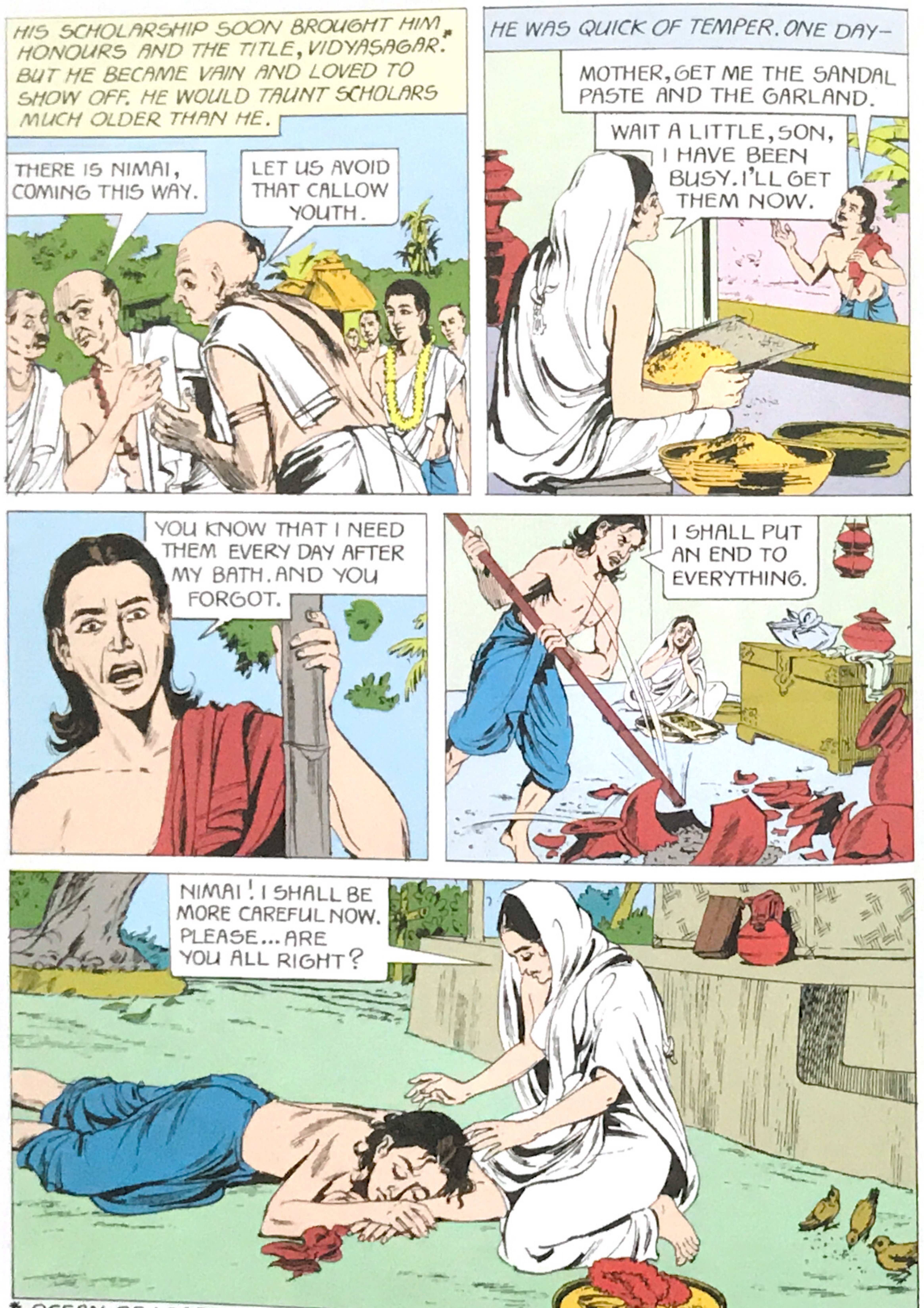




* *ELDER BROTHER.*

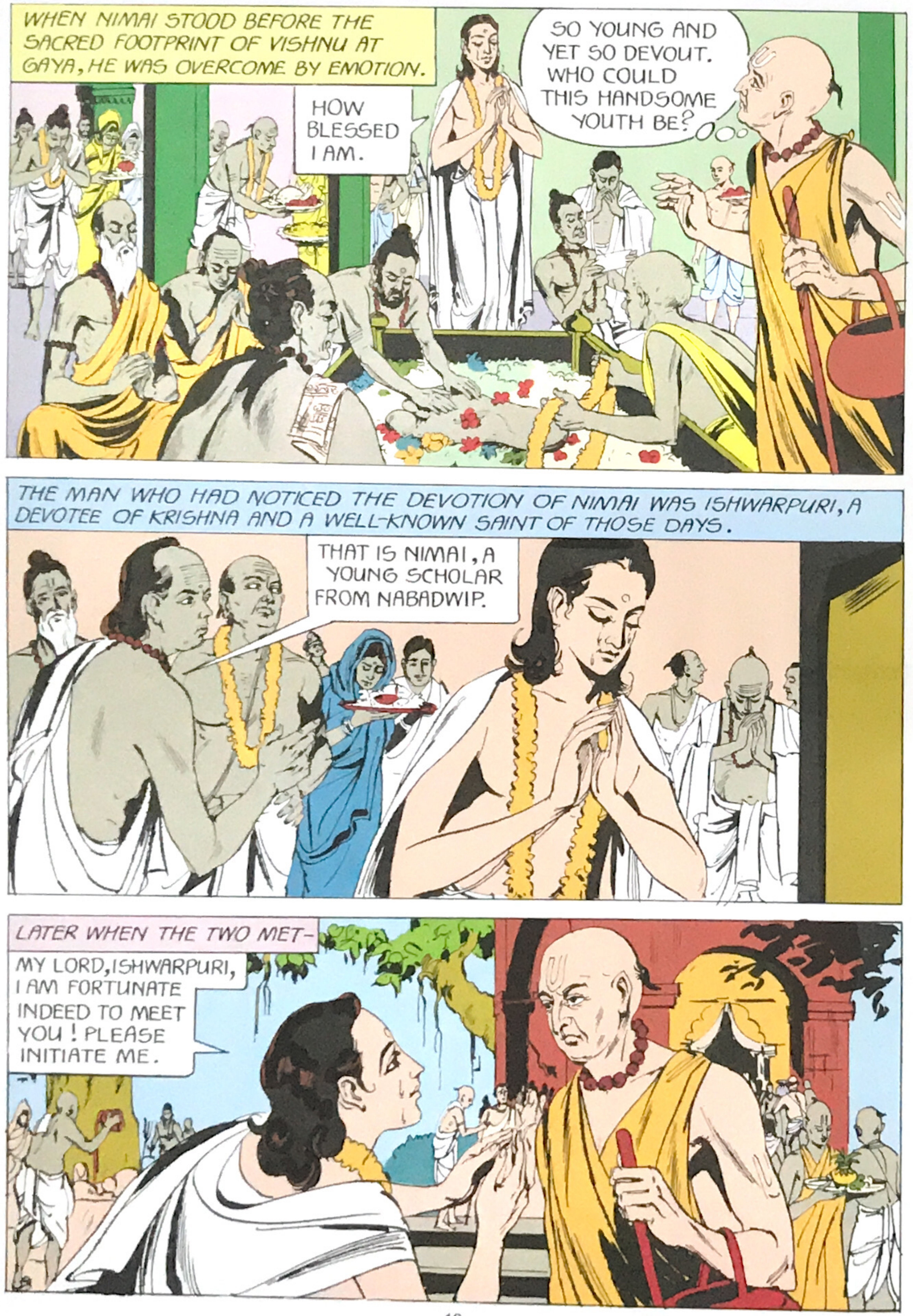

WASN'T IT TOO MUCH LEARNING THAT TOOK HIS BROTHER AWAY FROM US?
HENCEFORTH YOU WILL STOP ALL STUDIES.
OH! NO! FATHER!
WITH TIME TO SPARE, NIMAI WENT BACK TO HIS PRACTICAL JOKES. CAMOUFLAGED IN RUGS, HE AND HIS FRIENDS WOULD RAID THE ORCHARDS.
THE BULLS SEEM TO HAVE GOT IN AGAIN.
NOT BULLS, MY DEAR, BUT NIMAI AND HIS GANG OF RUFFIANS!
NIMAI HAD HOPED THAT COMPLAINTS FROM NEIGHBOURS WOULD MAKE HIS FATHER SEND HIM TO SCHOOL. SINCE THIS DID NOT HAPPEN, HE BEGAN TO PLAY MORE TRICKS.
O NIMAI. COME HERE. SEE HOW DIRTY YOU ARE.
I AM AN UNREAD FOOL. WHAT DO I KNOW OF DIRT OR CLEANLINESS?

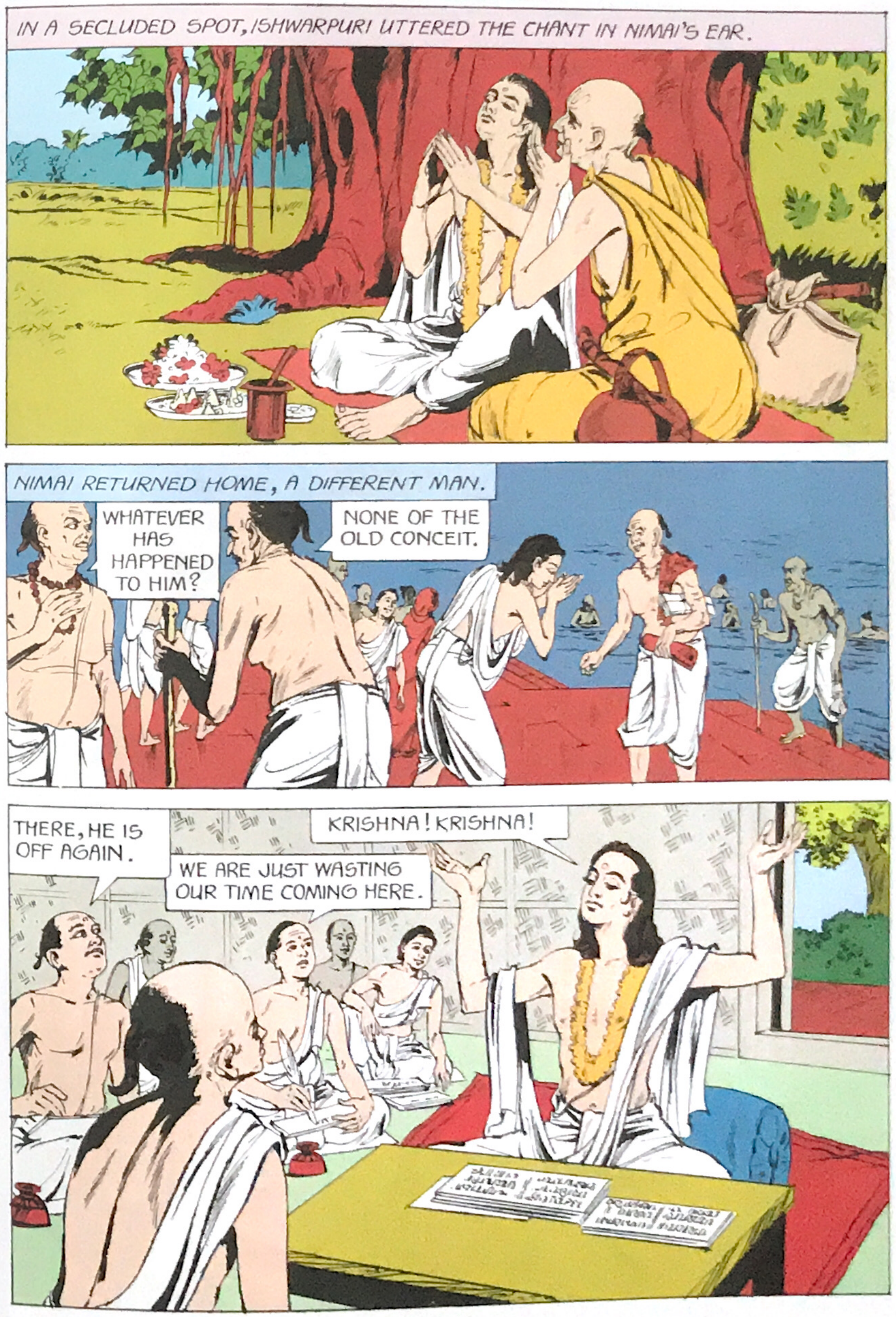

SHACHI DEVI UNDERSTOOD WHAT HE WAS DRIVING AT. SHE WENT TO JAGANNATH MISHRA.
IF WE ARE TO SAVE NIMAI, WE MUST SEND HIM TO SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY.
IF YOU INSIST, I'LL TAKE HIM TO SCHOOL.
NIMAI WAS A BRILLIANT STUDENT AND SOON MASTERED ALL THERE WAS TO LEARN IN GRAMMAR, RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY.
WE'D BETTER NOT ENTER INTO ANY ARGUMENT WITH HIM.
SUDDENLY ONE DAY, JAGANNATH MISHRA DIED. NIMAI WAS TEN YEARS OLD.
WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF ME NOW?
I WILL, MOTHER!! PLEASE DON'T CRY.
SHACHI DEVI NOW DEVOTED HERSELF TO THE SERVICE OF HER SON. NIMAI WORKED HARD, COMPLETED HIS STUDIES BEFORE HE WAS EIGHTEEN AND STARTED HIS CAREER AS A TEACHER.

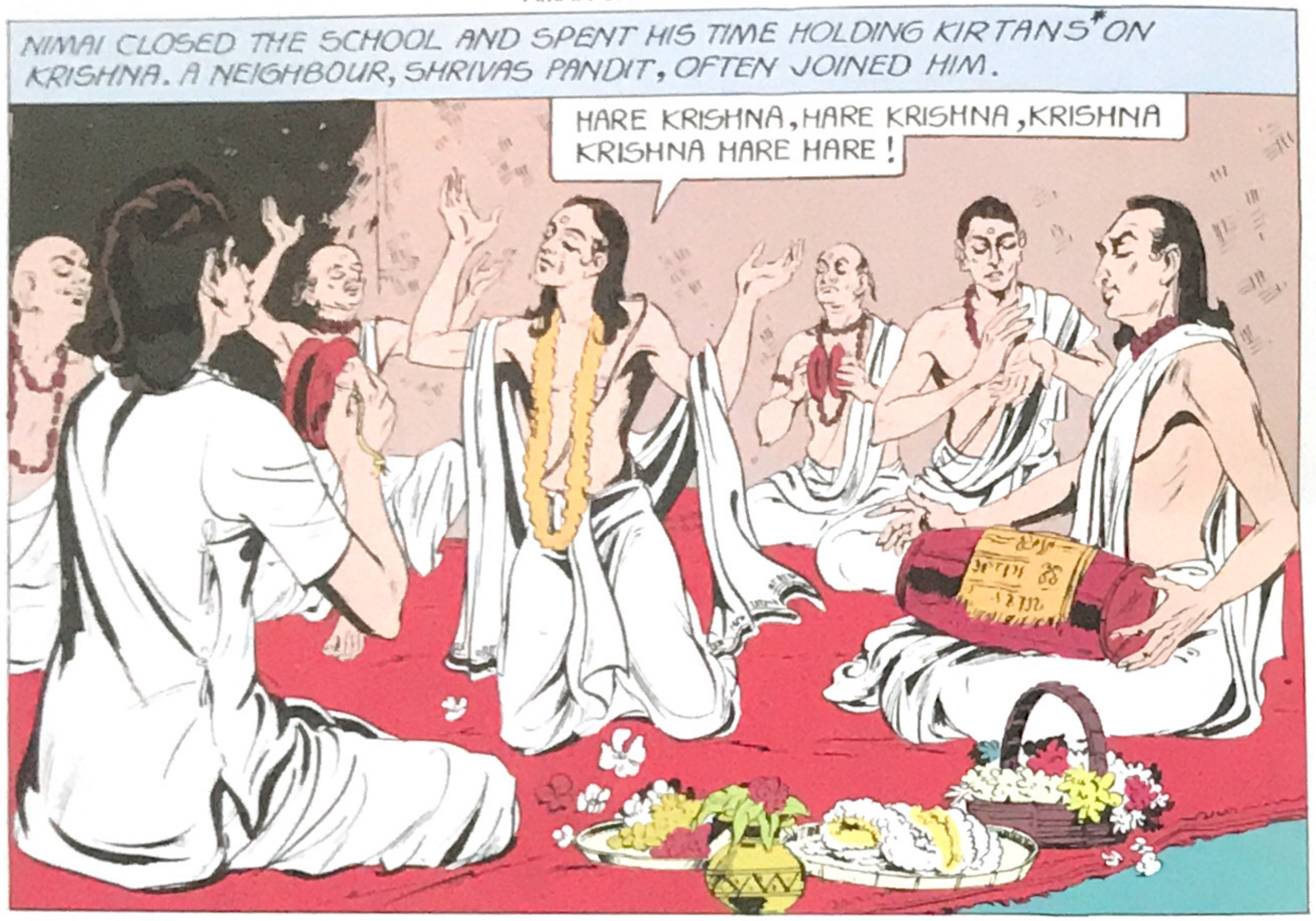


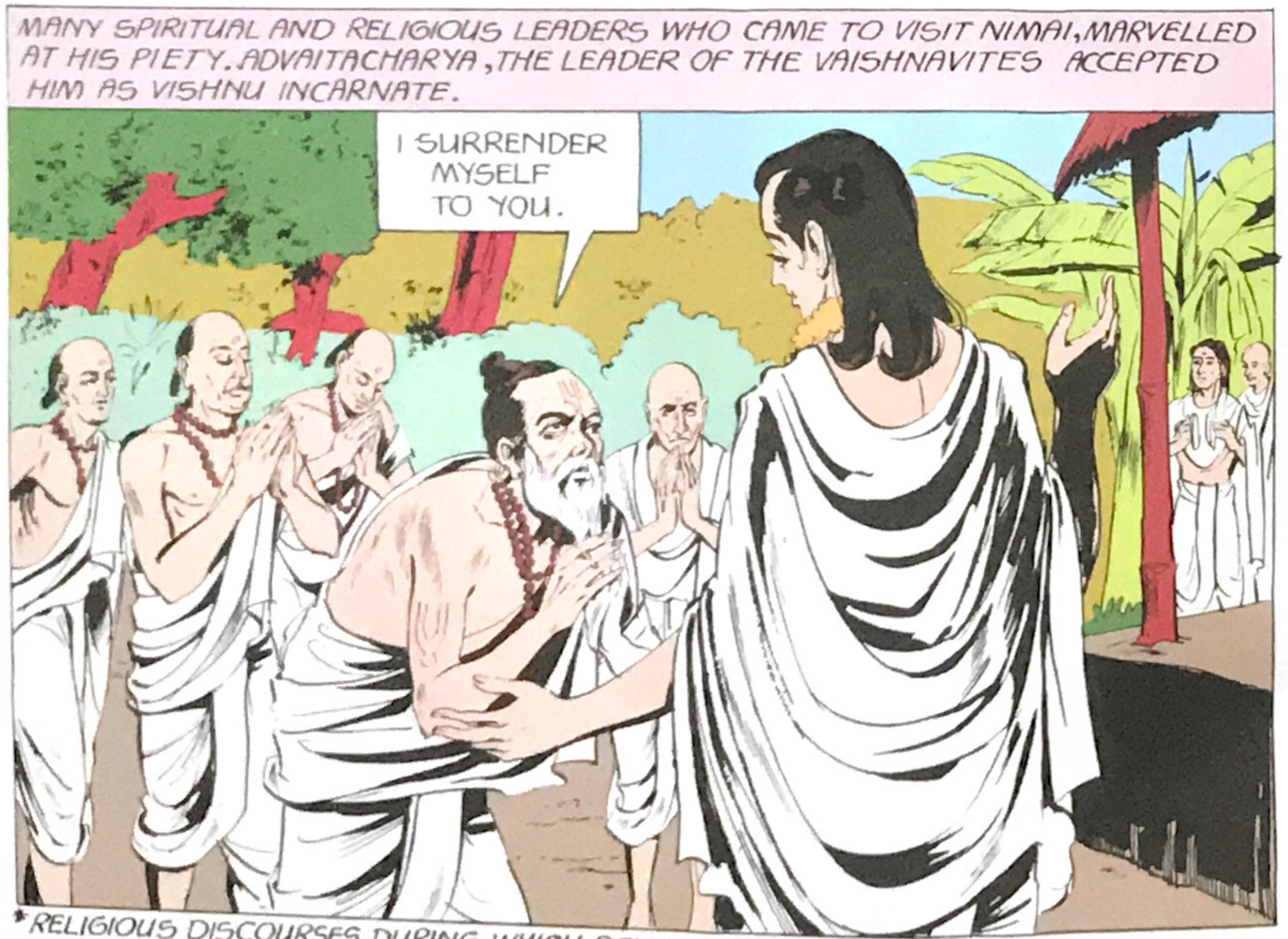
* OCEAN OF LEARNING.

* SACRAMENTAL OFFERING TO FOREFATHERS.

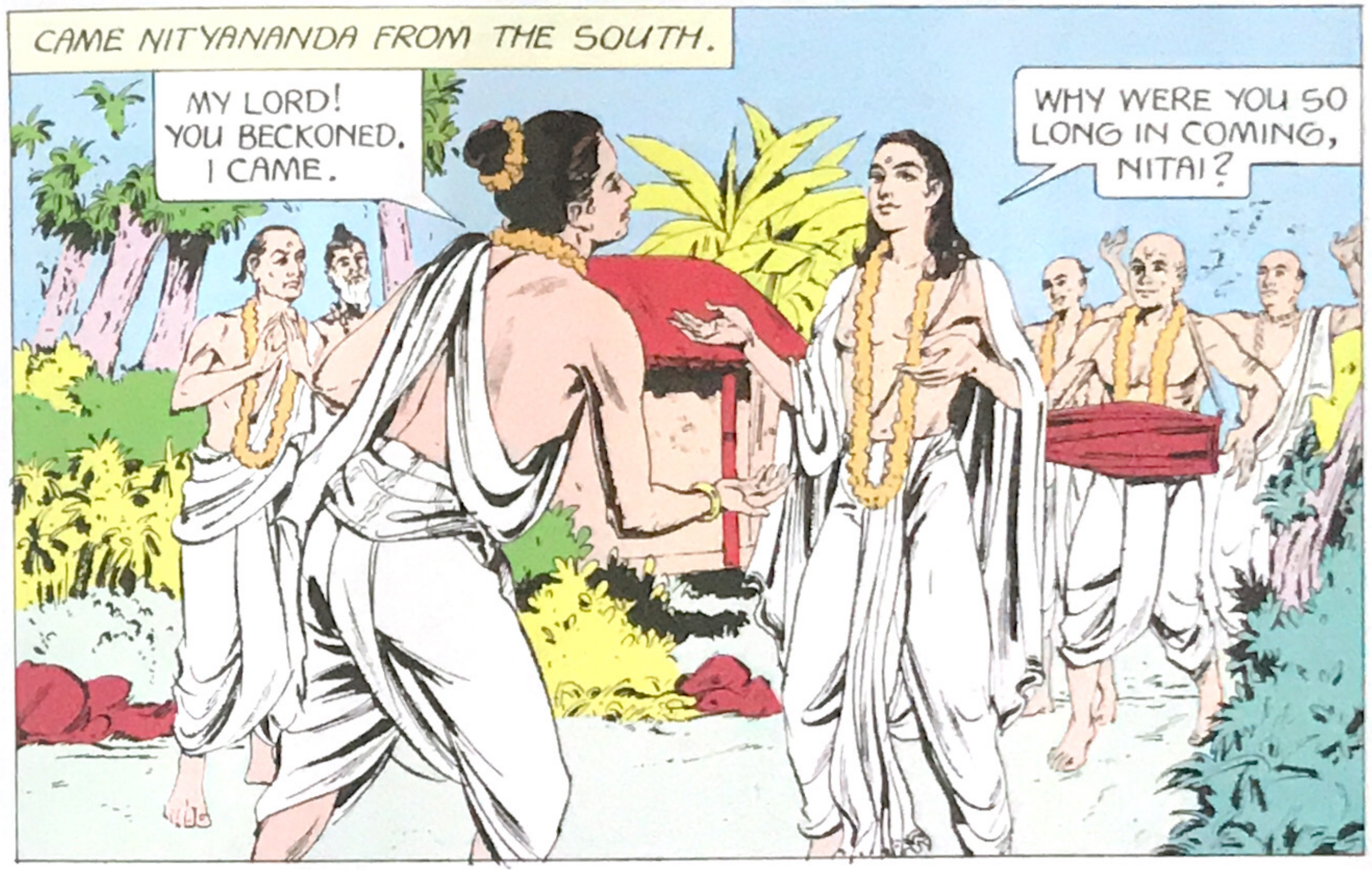

WHEN NIMAI STOOD BEFORE THE SACRED FOOTPRINT OF VISHNU AT GAYA, HE WAS OVERCOME BY EMOTION.
HOW BLESSED I AM.
SO YOUNG AND YET SO DEVOUT. WHO COULD THIS HANDSOME YOUTH BE?
THE MAN WHO HAD NOTICED THE DEVOTION OF NIMAI WAS ISHWARPURI, A DEVOTEE OF KRISHNA AND A WELL-KNOWN SAINT OF THOSE DAYS.
THAT IS NIMAI, A YOUNG SCHOLAR FROM NABADWIP.
LATER WHEN THE TWO MET—
MY LORD, ISHWARPURI, I AM FORTUNATE INDEED TO MEET YOU! PLEASE INITIATE ME.

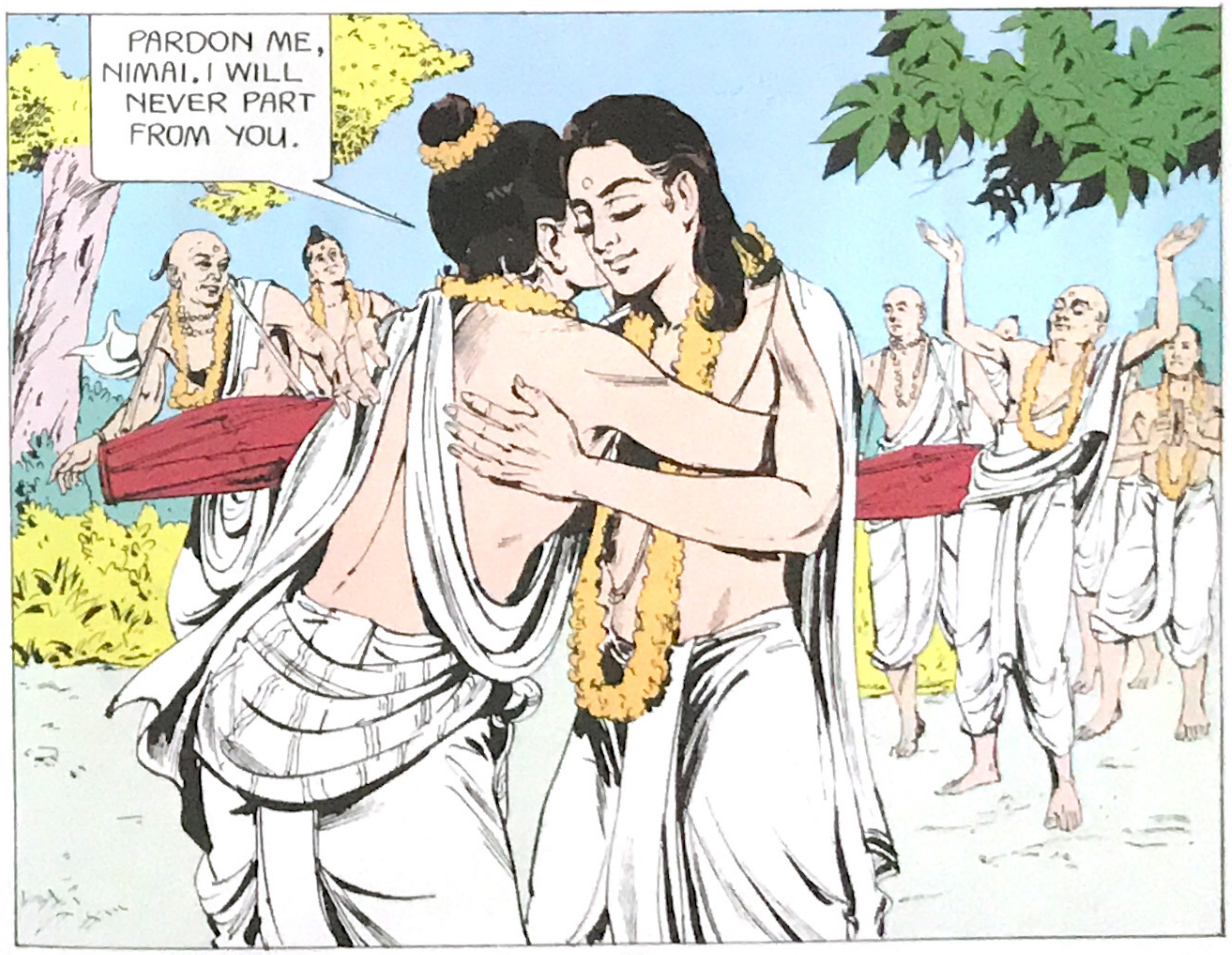

IN A SECLUDED SPOT, ISHWARPURI UTTERED THE CHANT IN NIMAI'S EAR.
NIMAI RETURNED HOME, A DIFFERENT MAN.
WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED TO HIM?
NONE OF THE OLD CONCEIT.
THERE, HE IS OFF AGAIN.
KRISHNA! KRISHNA!
WE ARE JUST WASTING OUR TIME COMING HERE.

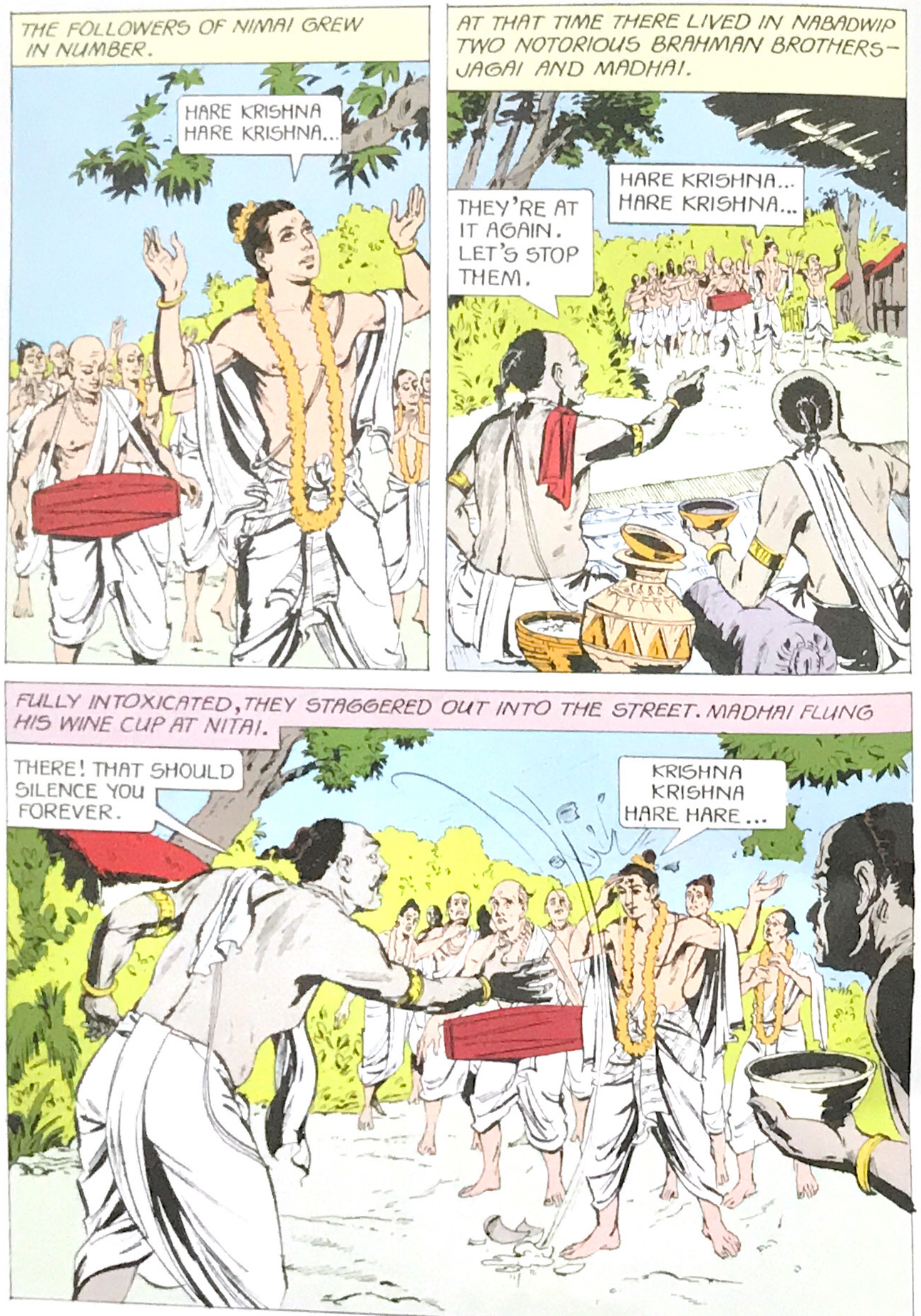


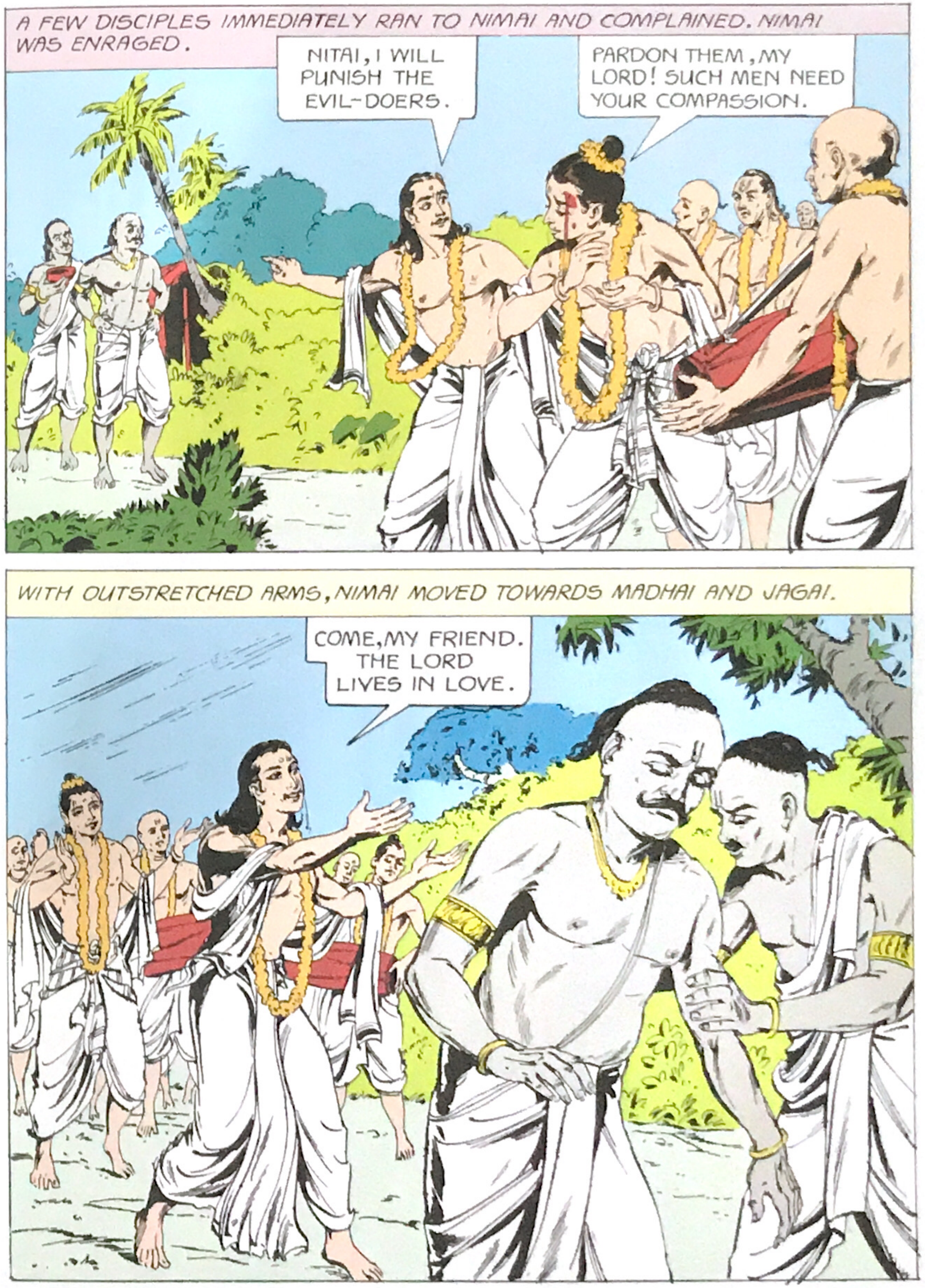


*RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES, DURING WHICH DEVOTIONAL SONGS ARE SUNG.

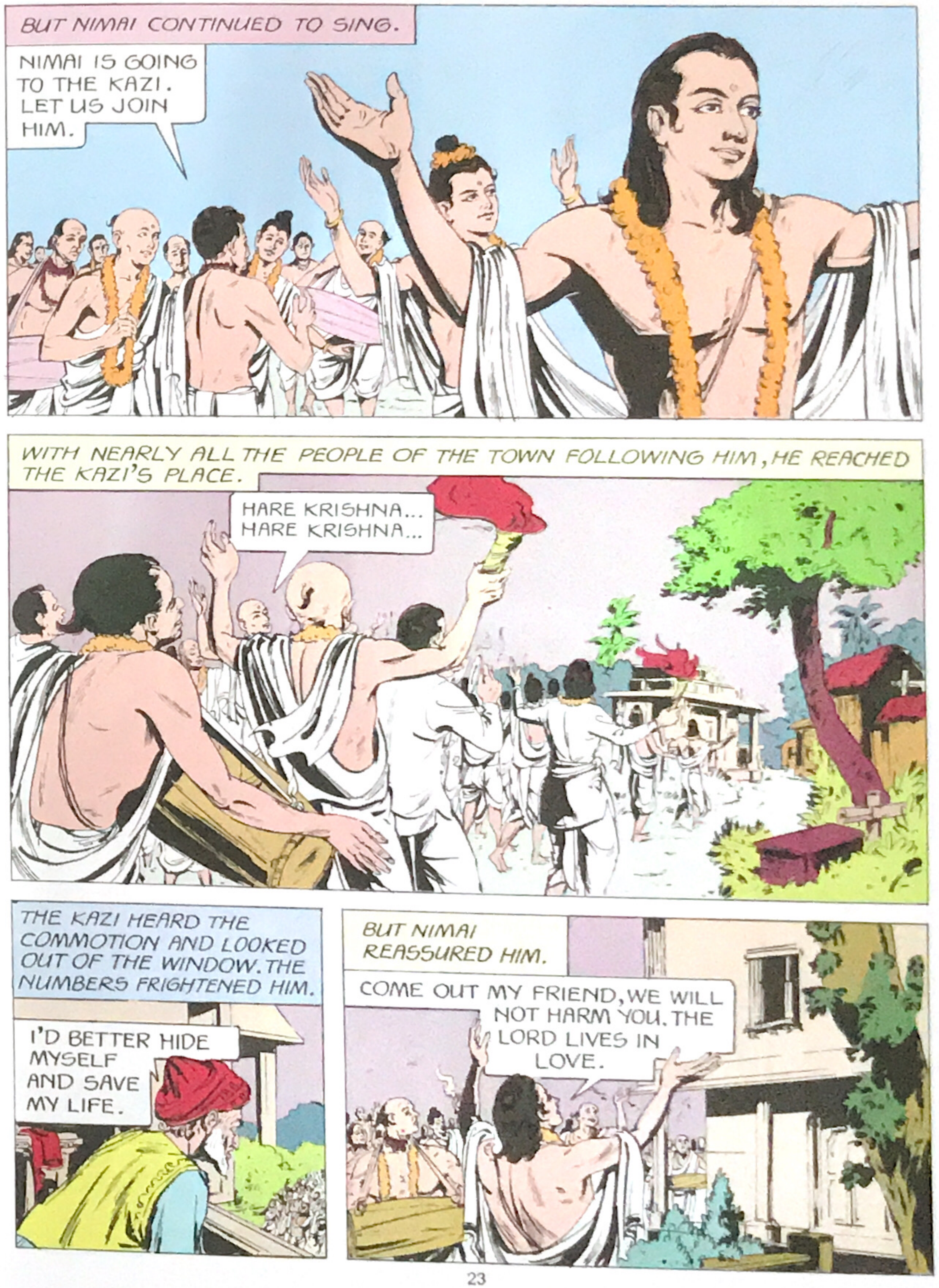




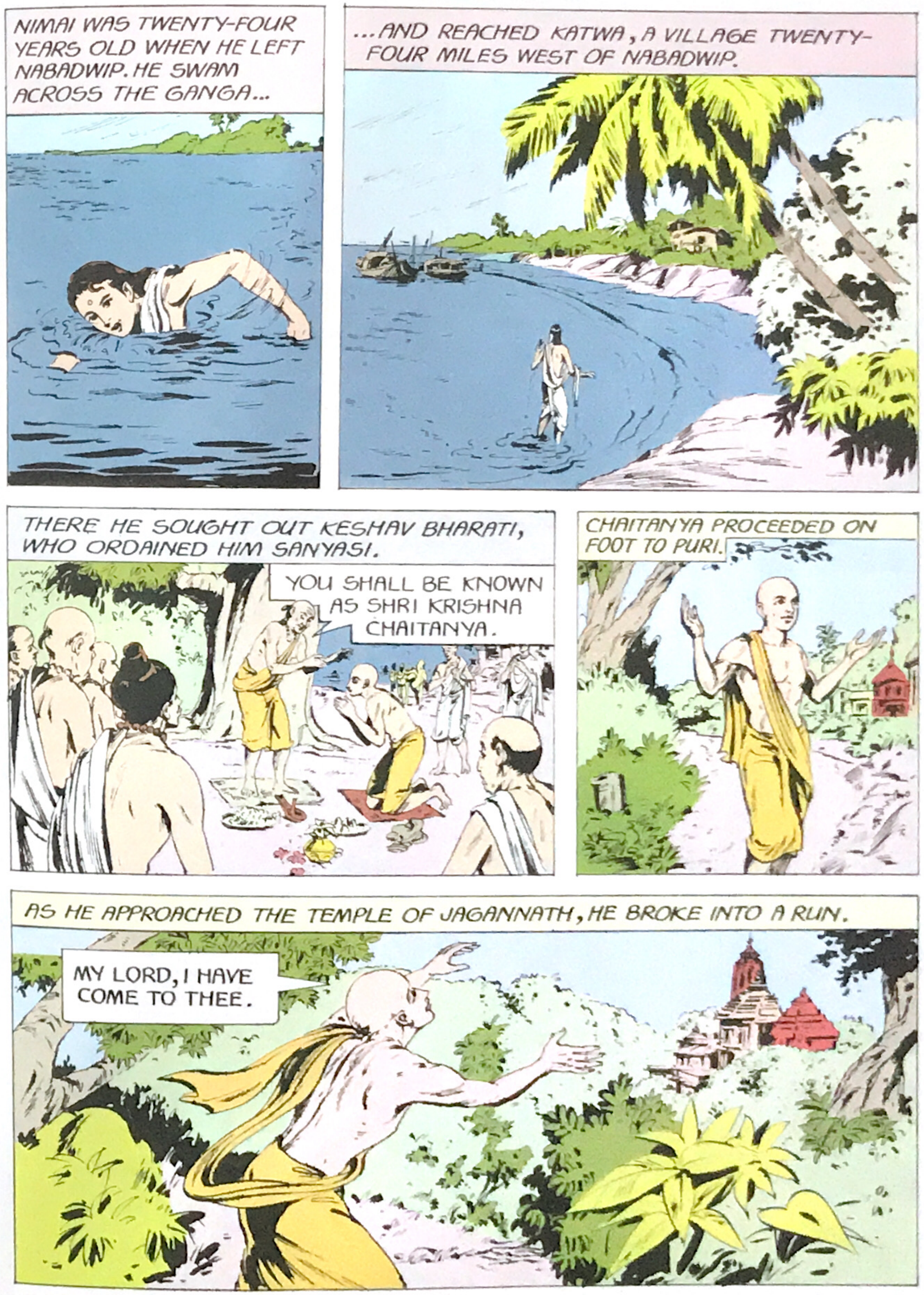

THE FOLLOWERS OF NIMAI GREW IN NUMBER.
HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA...
AT THAT TIME THERE LIVED IN NABADWIP TWO NOTORIOUS BRAHMAN BROTHERS– JAGAI AND MADHAI.
THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN. LET'S STOP THEM.
HARE KRISHNA... HARE KRISHNA...
FULLY INTOXICATED, THEY STAGGERED OUT INTO THE STREET. MADHAI FLUNG HIS WINE CUP AT NITAI.
THERE! THAT SHOULD SILENCE YOU FOREVER.
KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE...

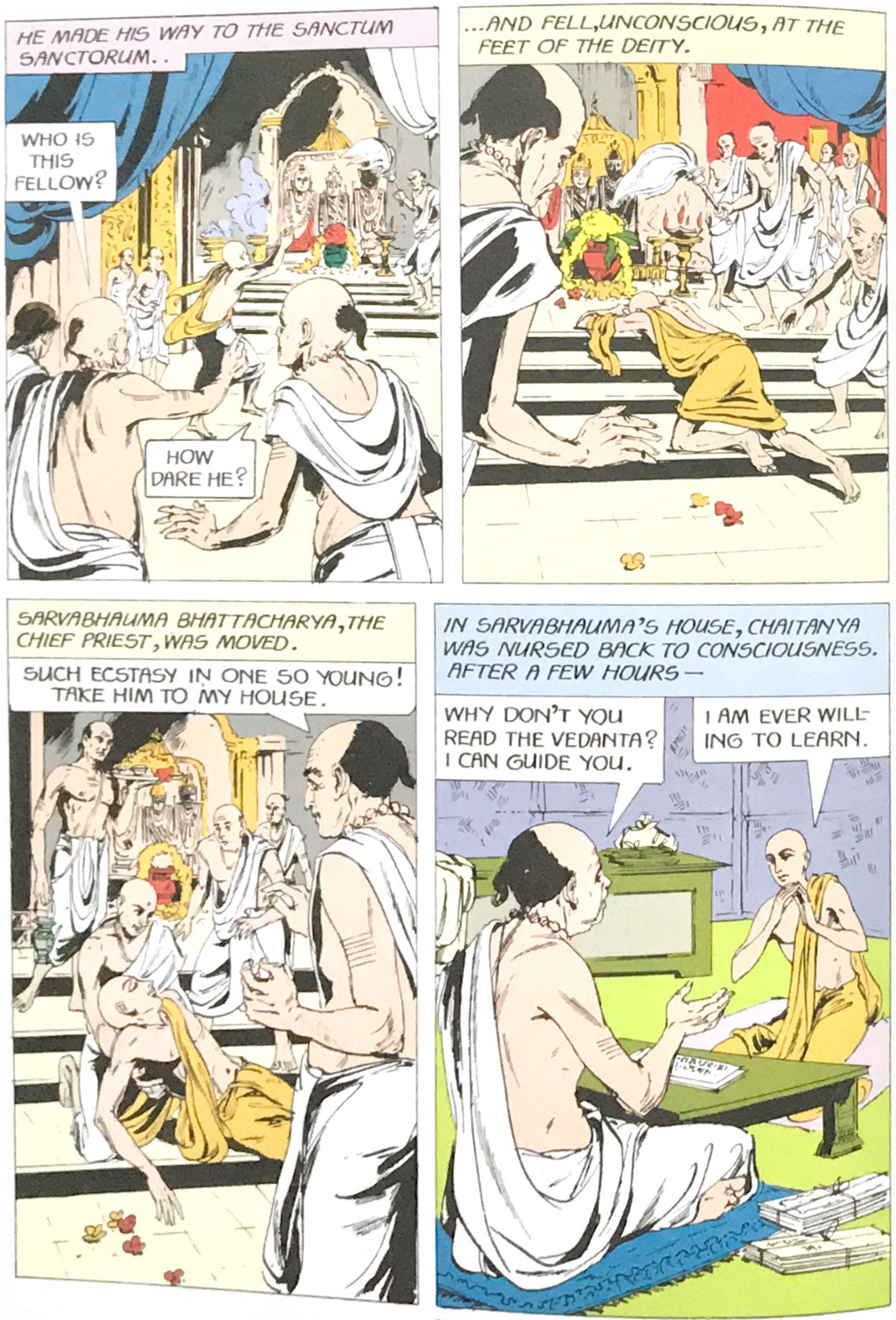

A FEW DISCIPLES IMMEDIATELY RAN TO NIMAI AND COMPLAINED. NIMAI WAS ENRAGED.
NITAI, I WILL PUNISH THE EVIL-DOERS.
PARDON THEM, MY LORD! SUCH MEN NEED YOUR COMPASSION.
WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS, NIMAI MOVED TOWARDS MADHAI AND JAGAI.
COME, MY FRIEND. THE LORD LIVES IN LOVE.

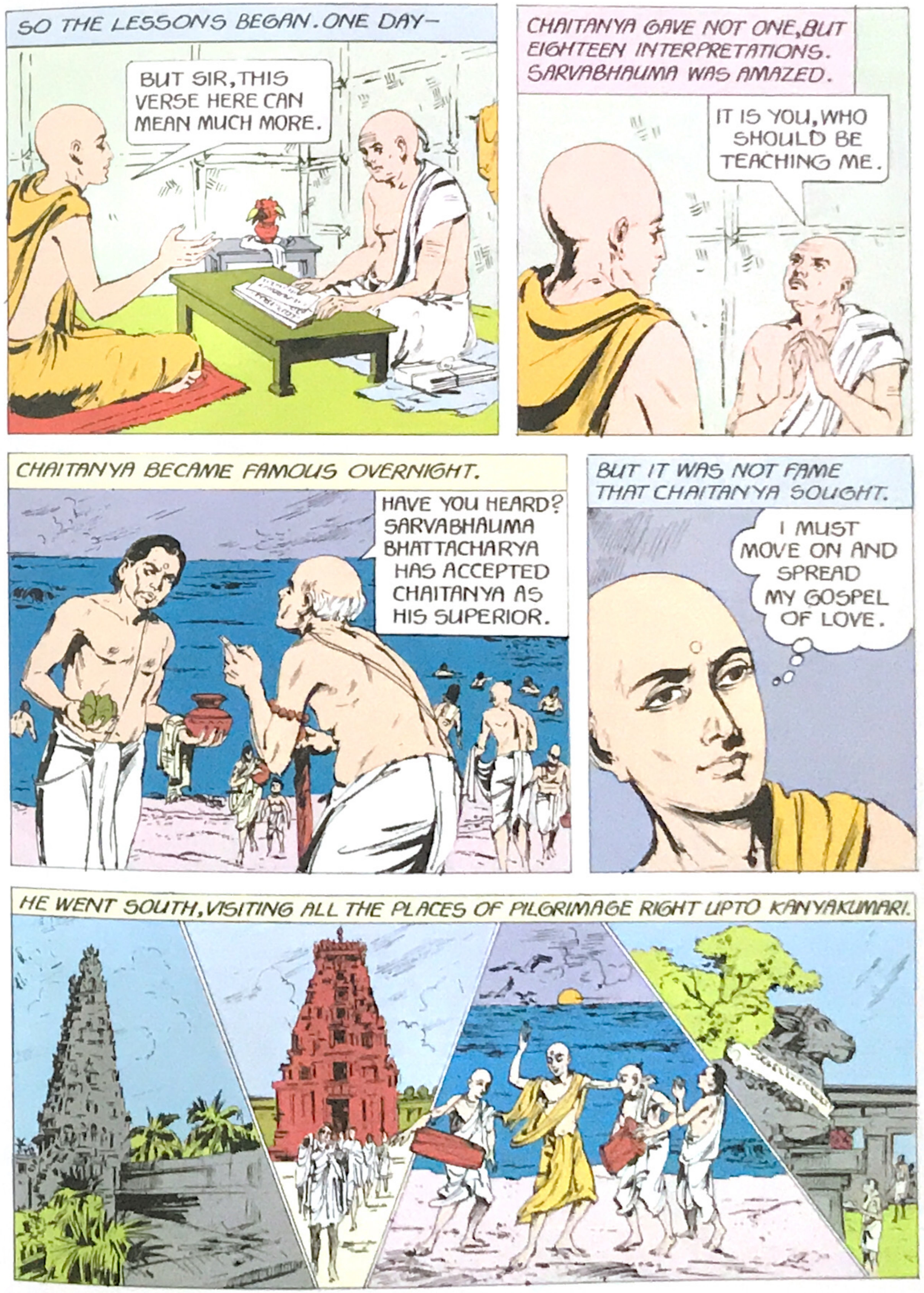
* KIRTANS HELD ON THE STREETS.

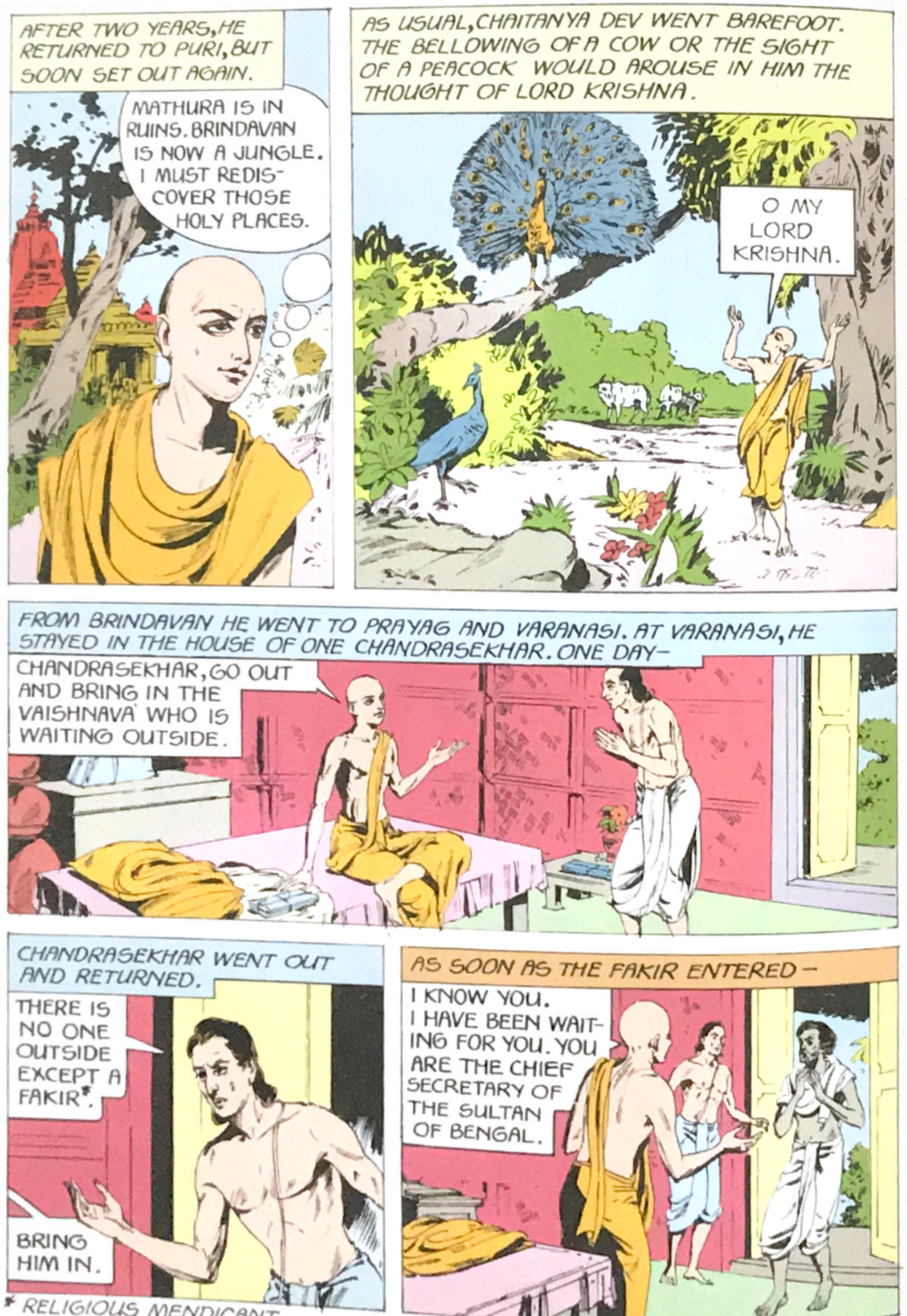


AT LAST, THE KAZI GATHERED ENOUGH COURAGE TO MEET NIMAI.
WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IS UNWORTHY OF A JUST RULER. I REQUEST YOU TO WITHDRAW THE ORDER FORTHWITH.
I WILL! I WILL!
LATER NIMAI HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE KAZI ON THE KORAN AND THE VEDAS.
NIMAI HAD BY NOW CONVERTED THE ENTIRE TOWN OF NABADWIP.
IT IS TIME I RENOUNCED THE WORLD AND CARRIED MY GOSPEL BEYOND THIS TOWN.
HE APPROACHED HIS MOTHER AND SPOKE TO HER OF HIS INTENTION. SHACHI DEVI WAS SILENT FOR A MOMENT, HER EYES OVERFLOWING WITH TEARS. THEN–
IF THIS BE GOD'S WILL, LET IT BE DONE.
NEXT, HE WENT TO HIS WIFE. SHE WAS FAST ASLEEP.
FORGIVE ME, DEAR. I CANNOT REMAIN A HOUSEHOLDER ANY LONGER.

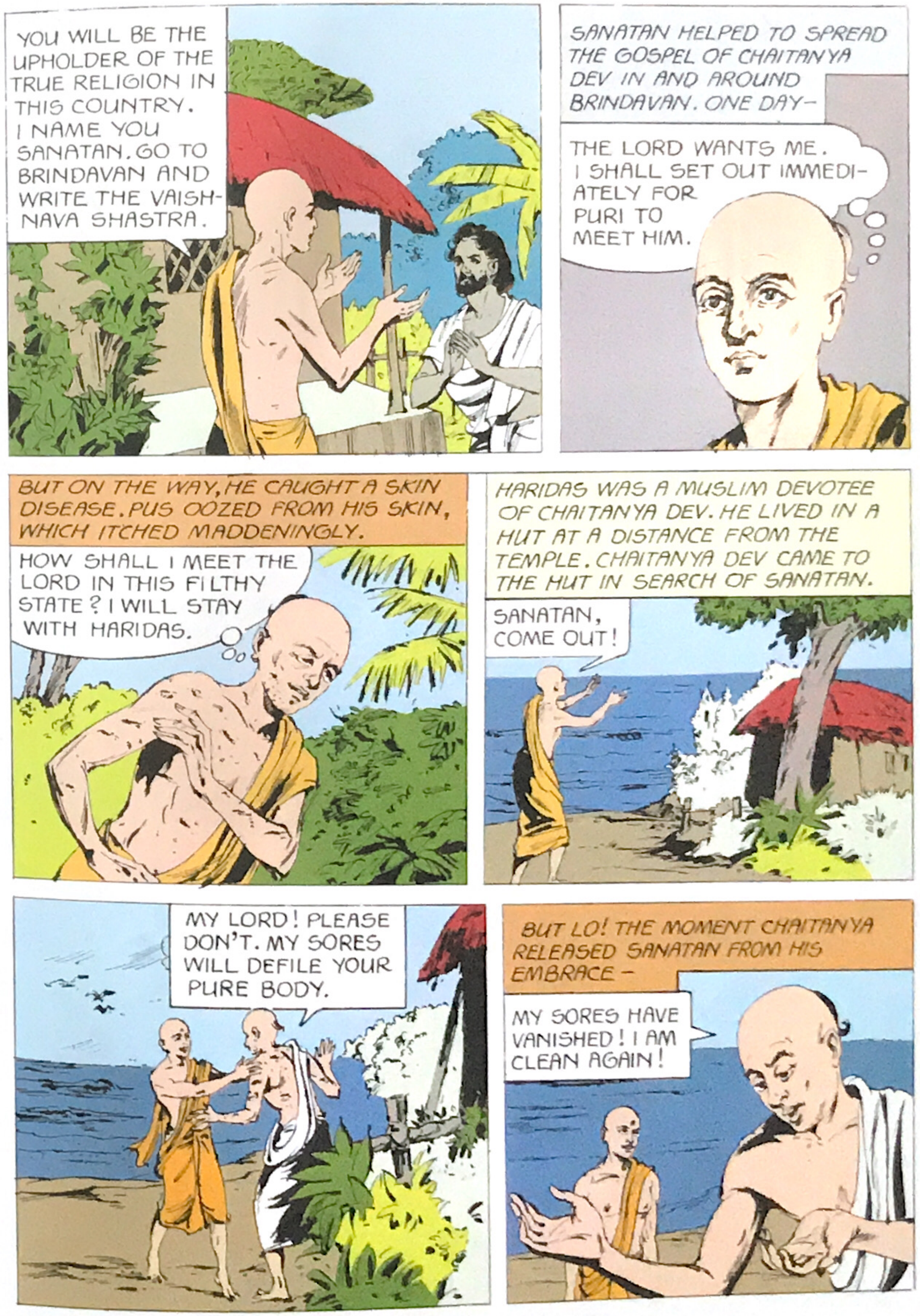

NIMAI WAS TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OLD WHEN HE LEFT NABADWIP. HE SWAM ACROSS THE GANGA...
...AND REACHED KATWA, A VILLAGE TWENTY-FOUR MILES WEST OF NABADWIP.
THERE HE SOUGHT OUT KESHAV BHARATI, WHO ORDAINED HIM SANYASI.
YOU SHALL BE KNOWN AS SHRI KRISHNA CHAITANYA.
CHAITANYA PROCEEDED ON FOOT TO PURI.
AS HE APPROACHED THE TEMPLE OF JAGANNATH, HE BROKE INTO A RUN.
MY LORD, I HAVE COME TO THEE.

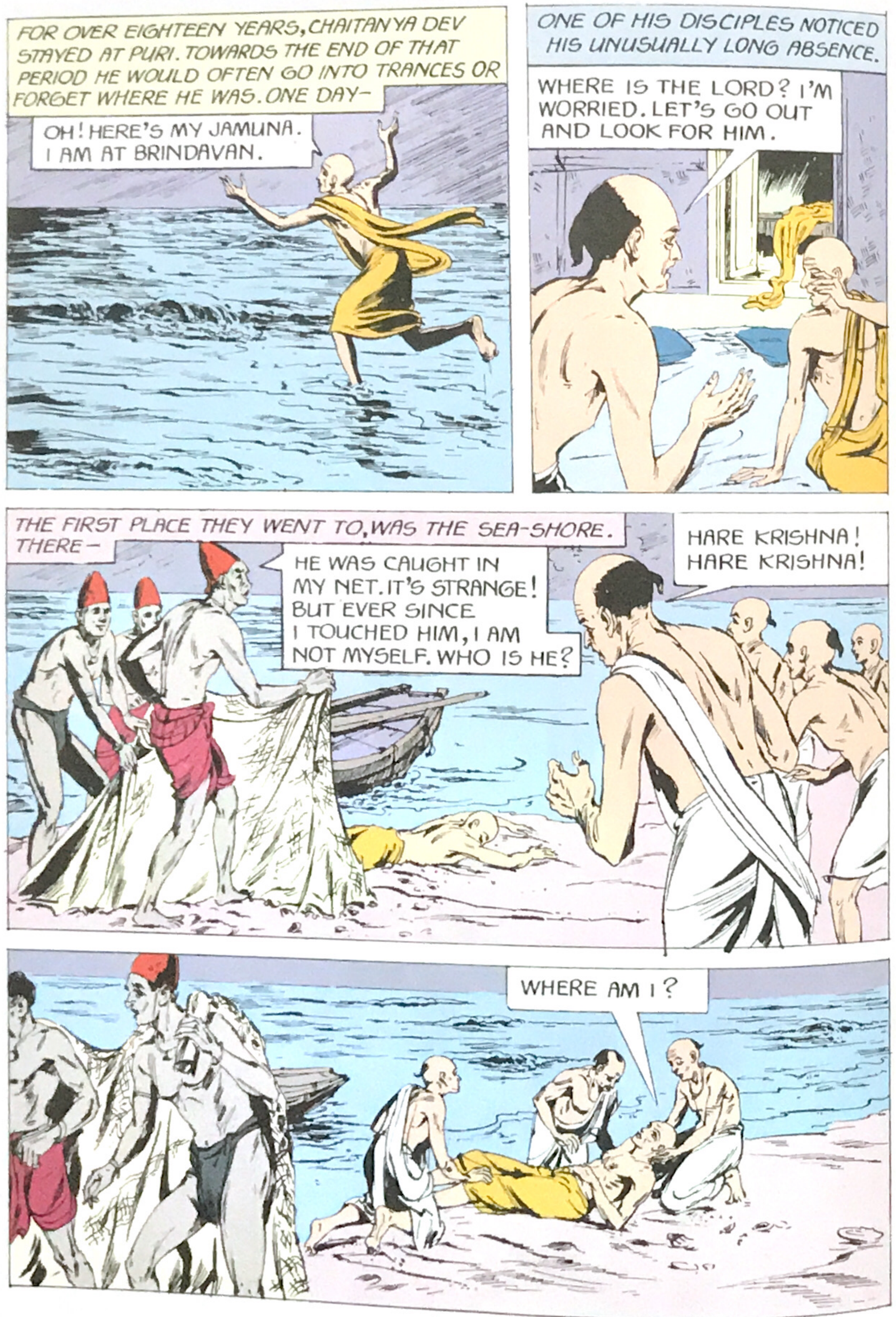

HE MADE HIS WAY TO THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM..
WHO IS THIS FELLOW?
HOW DARE HE?
...AND FELL, UNCONSCIOUS, AT THE FEET OF THE DEITY.
SARVABHAUMA BHATTACHARYA, THE CHIEF PRIEST, WAS MOVED.
SUCH ECSTASY IN ONE SO YOUNG! TAKE HIM TO MY HOUSE.
IN SARVABHAUMA'S HOUSE, CHAITANYA WAS NURSED BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS. AFTER A FEW HOURS—
WHY DON'T YOU READ THE VEDANTA? I CAN GUIDE YOU.
I AM EVER WILL-ING TO LEARN.


SO THE LESSONS BEGAN. ONE DAY—
BUT SIR, THIS VERSE HERE CAN MEAN MUCH MORE.
CHAITANYA GAVE NOT ONE, BUT EIGHTEEN INTERPRETATIONS. SARVABHAUMA WAS AMAZED.
IT IS YOU, WHO SHOULD BE TEACHING ME.
CHAITANYA BECAME FAMOUS OVERNIGHT.
HAVE YOU HEARD? SARVABHAUMA BHATTACHARYA HAS ACCEPTED CHAITANYA AS HIS SUPERIOR.
BUT IT WAS NOT FAME THAT CHAITANYA SOUGHT.
I MUST MOVE ON AND SPREAD MY GOSPEL OF LOVE.
HE WENT SOUTH, VISITING ALL THE PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE RIGHT UPTO KANYAKUMARI.



* RELIGIOUS MENDICANT.




FOR OVER EIGHTEEN YEARS, CHAITANYA DEV STAYED AT PURI. TOWARDS THE END OF THAT PERIOD HE WOULD OFTEN GO INTO TRANCES OR FORGET WHERE HE WAS. ONE DAY–
OH! HERE'S MY JAMUNA. I AM AT BRINDAVAN.
ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES NOTICED HIS UNUSUALLY LONG ABSENCE.
WHERE IS THE LORD? I'M WORRIED. LET'S GO OUT AND LOOK FOR HIM.
THE FIRST PLACE THEY WENT TO, WAS THE SEA-SHORE. THERE–
HE WAS CAUGHT IN MY NET. IT'S STRANGE! BUT EVER SINCE I TOUCHED HIM, I AM NOT MYSELF. WHO IS HE?
HARE KRISHNA! HARE KRISHNA!
WHERE AM I?

ONE MORNING IN 1533 A.D., CHAITANYA DEV WAS STANDING AS USUAL BY THE GARUDA PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF JAGANNATH. SUDDENLY, HE STARTED RUNNING TOWARDS THE DEITY.
AS HE ENTERED THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM AND OPENED HIS ARMS TO EMBRACE THE LORD, THE DOORS CLOSED MIRACULOUSLY BEHIND HIM.
LOOK! THE DOORS...!
A LITTLE LATER, THE DOORS OPENED. BUT CHAITANYA DEV WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. HAD HE AT LAST BECOME ONE WITH HIS LORD?
LORD! WHERE ARE YOU?
HOW CAN YOU DESERT US THUS?